

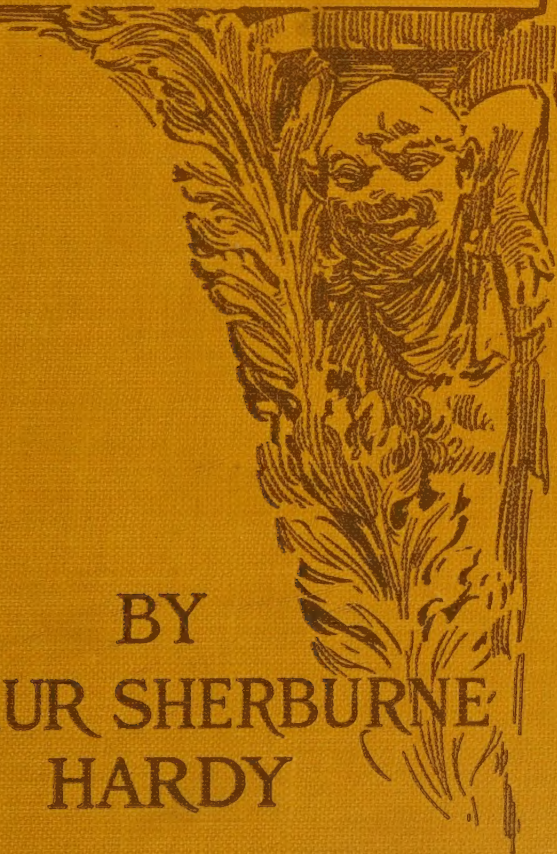
Nº 13

Bethany College



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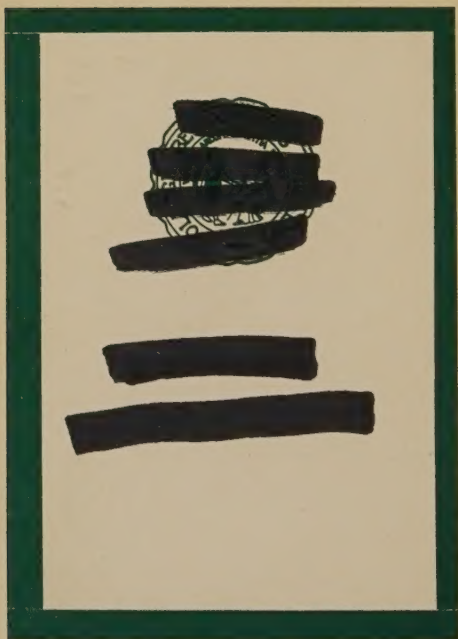


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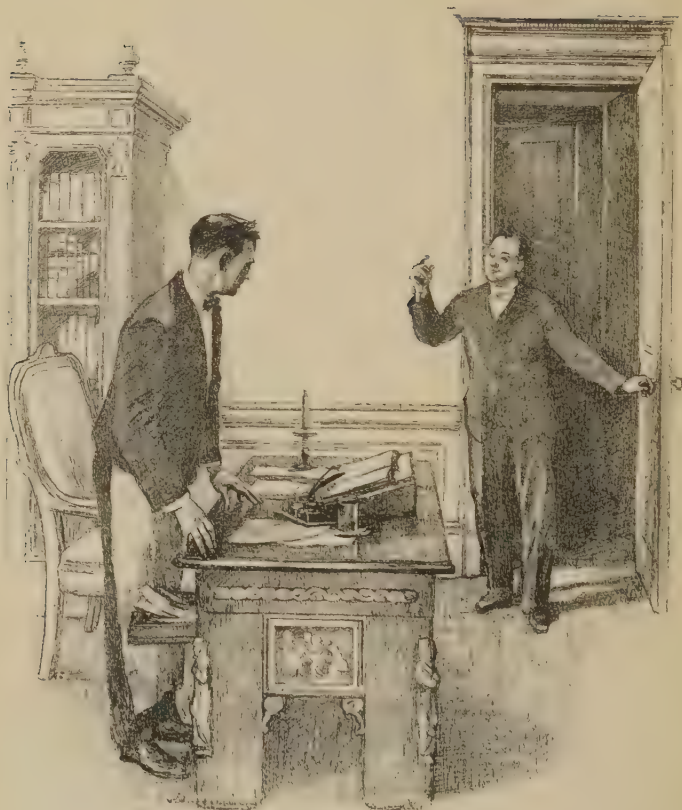
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

N^O. 13, RUE DU BON DIABLE



"IT IS IN THE PANTRY"

Page 18

No. 13
Rue du Bon Diable

BY

ARTHUR SHERBURNE HARDY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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No. 13, Rue du Bon Diable

I

ON the morning of Friday, the 9th of May, at twenty minutes past eleven, a messenger from the Crédit Lyonnais rang at No. 13, Rue du Bon Diable. Under his arm was one of those leather portfolios in which bank messengers are accustomed to carry drafts, bills of exchange, and like valuable papers. In this instance the portfolio contained thirty bank-notes of one thousand francs each, destined for M. Janvier. The occasion for the withdrawal of so large a sum was the birthday of his niece Corinne.

M. Janvier was a bachelor whose timid disposition in respect to the other sex had never been equal to the assault of a feminine heart, and whose retiring nature had never given a foothold to the enterprise of woman. That he had a heart of his own, however, a

heart worthy of capture, was proved when his only sister left Corinne an orphan at the age of six. At that age Corinne could by no stretch of the imagination be considered dangerous. M. Janvier had, therefore, opened to her the door of his long pent-up affection, which, escaping like a bird from a cage, began forthwith to disport itself in the extravagant manner peculiar to prisoners unexpectedly recovering their liberty.

On this 9th of May Corinne had reached her eighteenth birthday, and M. Janvier's affection, which had kept pace with the years, was rioting in prodigality. The fact is, Corinne possessed a charming neck and throat, and her uncle had conceived the idea of encircling it with a string of pearls. Without consulting any one in the matter, he had selected pearls as being best adapted to the softness and whiteness of the throat in question. Being a man of taste, he had also selected modest pearls, of a quality to match the surface on which they were to lie — young pearls, as it were, not overgrown or of a matronly aspect, nor yet insignificant

or trivial, but at once both exquisite and modest — in short, pearls for Corinne.

They were lying carefully concealed in the upper right-hand drawer of his writing-table in the library when the messenger arrived, and having signed the receipt, he thrust the bank-notes under the case in which the necklace was reposing on its bed of white velvet. After he had finished the last pages of the memoir he was writing on the social habits of the cicada, he would take them to Langlois, the jeweller, and in the evening, at dinner, the case would be hidden under Corinne's napkin, when undoubtedly another necklace would be clasped about M. Janvier's neck, and perhaps some tears would be shed — tears of mutual happiness. That he contemplated taking Corinne that evening to the theatre, her first dissipation, he reserved for a final surprise.

Finally, lest Corinne should be in doubt as to the donor, he carefully erased his name from one of his visiting-cards, as altogether too formal for so intimate an occasion, and

wrote in its place: "*To Corinne on her eighteenth birthday, from her uncle and humble servant*"; without in the least realizing that in this naïve attempt at playfulness he was making a veritable confession.

Closing the drawer, he resumed his manuscript, then reopened the drawer and removed the cover of the jewel-case. It was impossible to do otherwise, and while putting the final touches on his memoir, his glance wandered frequently from the page he was writing to the shining little balls on the velvet. He even counted them, and having once made a mistake, recounted them to satisfy himself that none were missing.

Besides Corinne, M. Janvier's household consisted only of Gervais, a sort of factotum who was both butler and valet; Rosalie, the cook; and Jocaste, the housemaid, who also waited upon Corinne and accompanied her in the street when her uncle was occupied with the cicada.

Ah, yes, there was also Potin, the concierge, who, though not directly in M. Jan-

vier's employ, ran errands for Rosalie — debts she liquidated by permitting him to gossip in the kitchen while she washed the lettuce or rolled the pastry. If on his retirement there was a tart the less on the shelf or the leg of a fowl missing, no one was the wiser.

M. Janvier enjoyed the delusion that he was master of this household. The truth is he was its slave. It was Rosalie who determined the menu. Jocaste selected his cravats and reminded him that his coat was getting shabby, sending without further ado for the tailor. And while Gervais brought every Saturday the weekly account for the settlement of the household expenses, figures were so distasteful to M. Janvier that, beginning by adding laboriously the columns, he had ended by pretending to do so — a system which permitted errors to creep in without risk of detection.

It is not to be inferred that Gervais was deliberately dishonest. The errors were at first so insignificant that they might readily be mistaken for clerical ones, and, like the acorn, they attained the proportions of the

oak by degrees quite insensible. For when a door is opened voluntarily, one begins by looking in, and, if the prospect is pleasing, ends by entering, and having entered once with some misgivings, and a second time with more confidence, finally the exceptional becomes the general and the unusual a habit. Moreover, if a certain percentage was accorded Gervais by those with whom he traded, it was only fair to assess a like amount on those he served.

Of all this Jocaste was ignorant. Nor would she have approved of it, being sturdily honest, and having various feminine methods of achieving her purposes equally effective and less open to reproach. But innocent as she was, and as all the daughters of Eve have maintained they were since the story of Eden was first invented, it was she who furnished the motive and excuse for Gervais's system of bookkeeping, it having been agreed between them that when their economies were sufficient to pay the entrance fee, they would establish themselves in an Eden of their own.

As for the remaining member of the household, Corinne, M. Janvier had no idea that he was in the clutches of a tyranny far more insidious than the brutal one forged by iron bolts and fetters — the tyranny of love and youth. This tyranny Corinne exercised as unconsciously as her uncle submitted to it.

It is not possible to describe Corinne adequately. To catalogue the various elements which composed her face is not enough. It is all very well for the painter to imitate the flush on the peach. To fully enjoy it one must bite the skin and extract its juices. To know Corinne a pen or brush is insufficient. One must hear her speak, see her smile, and watch the emotions chase each other over the surface of her face. Of these there were so many that the cleverest of artists would be in despair.

With her companionship, and that of the cicada whose social habits he observed in their glass cage, M. Janvier was completely satisfied. Until near her eighteenth birthday Corinne also was at peace. Her uncle

was lavish with dolls, omitting, though a philosopher, to take into account the reason for this childish passion for manikins stuffed with sawdust. Philosophers frequently fail to observe what goes on under their eyes, and children who are incapable of deception in other respects, at about Corinne's age become aware of a chamber in their hearts which they fear to open even to themselves.

Corinne had discovered this chamber one day when a certain Achille was purchasing roses at the same stall at which she and Jocaste were bargaining for gillyflowers. There was not the slightest reason for investing Achille with the qualities of his famous namesake. Yet that was what Corinne did. Perhaps it was his open brow, or honest eyes, or a certain noble air with which he took possession of his roses; but whatever it was, she suddenly became conscious of that chamber of mysteries whose very existence she was ready to deny, and of an occupant who, though an utter stranger, she could not dispossess. Thus it happened that M. Janvier, who knew so

many things of importance, was ignorant of the greatest of all.

In matters of this kind Jocaste was more observing than her master. Having in mind an Eden of her own, she was quick to discover Edens for others. That Corinne should betray a sudden preference for the flowers of one particular stall, that Achille's need of roses should also become more and more urgent, that on one occasion neither she nor the stallkeeper could make change and that the young gentleman with the open brow should come to the rescue, were the most natural things in the world. It was quite natural, too, that the stallkeeper should present Achille with one of her choicest rosebuds, and that Achille should beg mademoiselle to accept it, though in strict justice it was he and not Corinne who deserved reward. It was thus that while M. Janvier was studying the social instincts in the glass cage, other social instincts were maturing in a manner he little suspected.

That Jocaste was privy to these proceedings, that she even encouraged them dis-

cretly, Corinne was well aware. But they did not converse on the subject with the frankness which its innocence justified. In spite of the innocence the vague glamour of something forbidden hung about the person of Achille, and a mysterious happiness was born — a happiness to be sheltered, like one of those iridescent bubbles which vanish in too strong a sunlight.

That under these circumstances something should happen was inevitable. In this instance there was no reason why Achilles should sulk in his tent, and in this very month of May when M. Janvier was inspecting the assortment of pearls in M. Langlois's jewellery shop, Achille sallied forth one morning with that noble bearing of his and with Jocaste's aid crossed the Rubicon of respectful silence.

They were sitting, Jocaste and Corinne, on a seat in the Place des Vosges adjoining the Rue du Bon Diable. Children were playing in the gravel paths and nursery maids were pushing their charges before them in sun-protected carriages or gossiping



NATURAL THAT ACHILLES SHOULD BEG MADEMOISELLE TO
ACCEPT IT

together. A solitary policeman, his arms crossed under his cape, was strolling about. Corinne had been to the hairdresser's, who had advised her to sit in the May sunshine, and, her hat on her knees, was waiting for the sun to remove the last traces of dampness from her tightly coiled hair, when Jocaste happened to remember that there were cream cheeses to be bought for the strawberries. This recrudescence of memory came to her just as Achille appeared at the far end of the path. Among so many children, with a guardian of the peace nearby, she reasoned that Corinne would be quite safe for the five minutes required to purchase the cheeses. Except the policeman and the one she affected to ignore, not a man was in sight, and between the far end of the path and the seat where they were sitting were so many branching alleys that the doctrine of chances argued overwhelmingly for safety.

When Achille lifted his hat and begged mademoiselle's permission to sit down beside her, Corinne was too astonished to

speak. M. Janvier was one of those persons who believe in the innate goodness of human nature. A mother might have cautioned Corinne about things which never entered his head. The only mentor she knew was her own instinct, and it certainly told her that something unusual was about to happen. Its voice, however, was not very alarming, and to run after Jocaste, already disappearing in the shrubbery, would be undignified and ridiculous. It was very bold in Achille to address her — but he was very respectful. Nevertheless, she blushed furiously.

The fact is, both Achille and Corinne were children, in spite of the noble air and tightly coiled hair. In the time Jocaste gave to the cheeses they learned about each other what for their elders would have required a long and intimate acquaintance: that made-moiselle lived with her uncle, who doted on her — naturally — street and number were not forgotten — was almost eighteen — that he was only a year older, employed in the *Crédit Lyonnais* as messenger, where he

already had a salary of twelve hundred francs — that the roses were for his mother, a widow —

At this instant of their mutual confessions instinct told Achille that they had conversed long enough, for Jocaste was turning the corner of the shrubbery, and to his inexperience was a dragon not to be lightly affronted.

To this encounter neither Jocaste nor Corinne made the slightest allusion. For Jocaste to admit knowledge of it would be to bewail her neglect of duty and to reprove Corinne, for neither of which she had the slightest inclination. And Corinne — why should she speak of anything so trivial and unimportant!

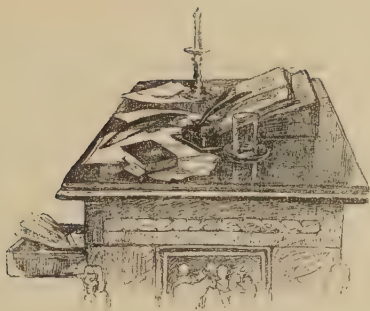
One can only imagine the joy of Achille when, a few days later, he was entrusted with the delivery of thirty thousand francs to No. 13, Rue du Bon Diable. That neither in the passage from the vestibule to the library nor from the library to the vestibule did his divinity appear was a bitter disappointment. To be, as it were, in the very

inner temple and not to have a glimpse of the goddess was a cruel trick of fortune. M. Janvier counted the notes and signed the receipt with an unheard-of celerity, and his pen had resumed its travels over the page of his manuscript before the receipt was returned to the portfolio. There was positively no straw of delay at which to clutch.

“Good-day, sir,” said Achille dejectedly.

“Good-day,” replied M. Janvier affably.





II

AS happens frequently in the case of savants, M. Janvier was inclined to absent-mindedness, and while completing his memoir it occurred to him to consult the last work of M. Fabre, whose treatise on cicada was a classic. Forgetting for the moment both the pearls and the bank-notes in the open drawer, he sallied out bareheaded into the street to the bookseller across the way.

Under the archway he encountered Potin returning from the creamery with the jar of milk he was in the habit of going for night and morning, a service for which Rosalie compensated him with a liberality which would have dismayed M. Janvier had he

been aware of it — for Potin's appetite corresponded with his bulk. On the previous Sunday, when M. Janvier and Corinne had breakfasted in the country, Potin also had enjoyed a holiday, and had borrowed Gervais's revolver to amuse himself with the sparrows in the moat of the fortifications. He had spent the morning in thoroughly cleaning it, and it occurred to him that now was a suitable time to return it. Entering by the service door, after depositing the jar of milk in the kitchen, he went into the pantry in quest of Gervais. Not finding him there as he expected, nor in the dining-room, though it was the hour for laying the table for the twelve-o'clock breakfast, as M. Janvier was out he ventured as far as the library door, for he wished to tell Gervais that he had left the revolver on the pantry shelf. Conscious that he had no business to be where he was, he advanced on tiptoe, and seeing Gervais bending over M. Janvier's table, hissed softly to attract his attention.

Besides cicada M. Janvier had another hobby, indigestion — a harmless one, as it

existed only in his imagination. In his absence Gervais, whose habit it was to bring the glass of hot water his master insisted upon drinking before his repasts, when setting the glass on the library table observed in the open drawer the shining circlet of pearls. He was amazed that M. Janvier, who could not boast even of a watch fob, should be indulging in jewels. What amazed him still more was the sight of the thirty bank-notes lying loosely under the case. He began by staring at them, then passed to fingering them, and while thus engaged there came into his head the thought that with thirty such bits of paper he could purchase the thread-and-needle shop of M. Rodin, marry Jocaste, and have something to spare. Gervais disclaimed all responsibility for this idea. It came to him from without, like a bird alighting on a tree, like a hawk that swoops down upon an innocent rabbit. He combated it at first vigorously, and was replacing the notes as he found them when he heard Potin's signal. Startled, and then frightened, he gazed at

Potin with the constrained air of guilty embarrassment. Potin also was embarrassed, though he did not know why, — for embarrassment is contagious, — and for two whole seconds they stared at each other stupidly. Finally, jerking his thumb over his shoulder and winking knowingly, Potin whispered, “It is in the pantry”; and, dreading to be found by M. Janvier in the library, he beat a hasty retreat.

Gervais endeavored to persuade himself that Potin had seen nothing. Indeed, what was there to see? Nothing had happened, for nothing was intended. But while laying the table for breakfast these crisp notes were continually rustling in his ears. He said to himself the project was absurd, that it was not a project at all, only an idea. It was true that Jocaste was becoming impatient. Moreover, M. Rodin was about to retire from business, and such an opportunity occurred but once in a lifetime. Only the day before Jocaste had remarked that at the rate of their present economies they might as well renounce all hope of establishing

themselves. To please Jocaste, Gervais would cut off his right hand. He also greatly desired an heir. But Jocaste was prudent. If there was to be an heir in Eden, there must also be adequate provision.

Having prepared the table, Gervais returned to the library. No, he had made no mistake — there were thirty.

Later, in endeavoring to explain himself to himself, he declared that he had no purpose, that he was like a child who, caught in a fault, commits a greater one — that fear impelled him. However that may be, certain it is that hearing M. Janvier returning, terror seized him, and in that terror he put the notes into his pocket instead of into the drawer.

While serving the breakfast this terror became a panic. M. Janvier was in the best of humor. He was confident he had detected an error in M. Fabre's treatise, between the pages of which in a moment of abstraction he slipped the card destined for Corinne, to mark the passage where his colleague had stumbled. Naïvely jubilant over his dis-

covery, he counselled Corinne to go to the flower market to make some purchases for the decoration of the dinner-table in honor of the day — a counsel she immediately put into execution, giving her uncle two from her inexhaustible store of kisses as she set out joyously with Jocaste for chaperon.

During this time the agitation of Gervais had been increasing. It was clear that M. Janvier had not yet discovered that the notes were missing. But in imagination Gervais saw him returning to the library. He saw him going to the drawer. The certainty of discovery hung over his head like the sword of Damocles.

Another thought haunted him. Jocaste was an honest girl. She would disown him. It was true that like Eve she had been the tempter, but it was also certain that unlike Eve she would refuse partnership in infamy. Yet the strange thing was that instead of wishing to undo what he had done, his sole thought was to conceal it. Already that Nemesis of confusion which dogs the heels of the criminal was pursuing him.

When at last he saw his fears were about to be realized, that M. Janvier was actually entering the library, the orderly mechanism of his brain fell into complete disorder. Still working on with feverish energy, it escaped control — there was a crash, as when, one part being broken, the whole engine races to destruction under the impulse of its own forces; in short, as the saying is, he lost his head.

For this state of mind medicine and morals have conflicting terms.

Of what happened thereafter he could give no clear account. There was an interval resembling a dream, of which all recollection was vague and unintelligible. He found himself standing behind M. Janvier's chair listening to the report of a pistol, a blur of bluish smoke hanging over M. Janvier's head, bent forward on the breast, a pungent odor in his nostrils, staring at a bullet which after traversing the brain had shattered the face of the clock behind the inkstand and come to rest on the blotting-pad of the table. Some one, some thing,

had ordered him to act, and he had acted, blindly, unhesitatingly, without reflection.

Instantly he recovered his reason. Before the noise of the report had died away, even while pressing the trigger, he saw clearly. What a stupid, idiotic thing he had done! The folly of it blotted out all sense of criminality. How was it possible that he, Gervais, should have done it? Why had he not returned the bank-notes to the drawer? There had been ample opportunity. Even after M. Janvier had discovered they were missing, he had only to say: "What carelessness to leave such a sum in this manner! Here it is!" — to obtain the credit of being more thoughtful of his master's interests than M. Janvier himself. It was Potin's work, not his — Potin, who had left the revolver there, on the shelf of the pantry, ready to his hand — Potin, triple-headed fool!

But all these thoughts, passing through his mind with the rapidity of lightning, were dominated by another. *It* was done! It could not be undone; he was face to face

with a terrible danger and not a moment was to be lost. How stupid it all was! If he had really meant to do it, would he have left everything to chance, without forethought or premeditation? His mind began to work with extraordinary lucidity. It was necessary to form a plan, to think of something, and he seized desperately upon the first idea which suggested itself — a thief, who was also an assassin. There was no time for careful elaboration. Fortunately Jocaste and Corinne were out, but they might return at any moment. Rosalie in the kitchen had apparently heard nothing. Slipping the revolver into his pocket, he listened a moment intently, then went to the door leading from the anteroom into the outside vestibule and unfastened the safety latch — for if there was an assassin there must be the possibility of entrance. He would say that he had unfastened the latch in order that Corinne and Jocaste might come in without disturbing him, — that being close at hand in the pantry there was no danger.

While drawing the bolt he thought of

the necklace lying exposed in the drawer. Would a thief, satisfied with the money, abandon the pearls? Possessed by his theory, he decided in the negative, and, conquering his aversion to reënter the library, he went back for the necklace, dropping it into the pocket of his sack coat. About to retire, he saw the disfigured bullet on the blotter. A sort of rage seized him. Difficulties were multiplying. It was impossible to leave this incriminating evidence, for he remembered reading of a case in which the calibre of a bullet had played a fateful rôle in the chain of evidence. Certainly a thief who was also a murderer would not leave behind him so important a clue. Avoiding the *thing* in the chair, he reached for the flattened lead, secreting it in his pocket with the necklace. The click of the bullet against the barrel of the revolver reminded him of this other accuser. What should he do with all this damning evidence on his person? He was like a man who, fighting a duel, cannot parry fast enough the thrusts of his adversary. The thought of ridding himself of the

pistol he rejected. Every one in the house knew he possessed it, and he would have to account for its disappearance. Besides, where should he conceal it? There was no time to go to the river. He resolved to clean it thoroughly and to replace it where he habitually kept it. Hurrying to the pantry, he tore a napkin into shreds, forcing them one after another through the barrel with a lead pencil. Pouring some oil from the cruet on the last remaining strip, he passed it through the barrel in feverish haste. While doing so the memory of a happy day when he had astonished Jocaste by his skill in marksmanship mocked him. Hastening to his room, haunted by the fear of Jocaste's return, he replaced the pistol in his drawer with a sigh of relief and returned to the pantry. There on the shelf, forgotten, was the shell of the used cartridge. A cold perspiration broke out on his face. Was he losing his mind? He held it in his hand, looking about him, helpless. How many things to think of! Mechanically, without any purpose, he endeavored to fit the bullet to the shell, but

it would not enter. "Why do I waste time in this senseless manner," he moaned — and opened a cupboard in search of a hiding-place. On the shelf where he had thrust them he saw the torn shreds of the napkin, blackened by the powder — and laughed. Was his mind a sieve that it could hold nothing? "Come," he cried, "do something, quickly." With the fragments of the napkin in his closed hand he went into the kitchen to the oven.

Rosalie, setting her domain in order, remarked, "I smell cloth burning."

"It is nothing," he said, "an old dish-rag."

"Why do you not keep it for the ragman who comes every week?" she asked.

"Damnation!" he thought; "I must be more careful."

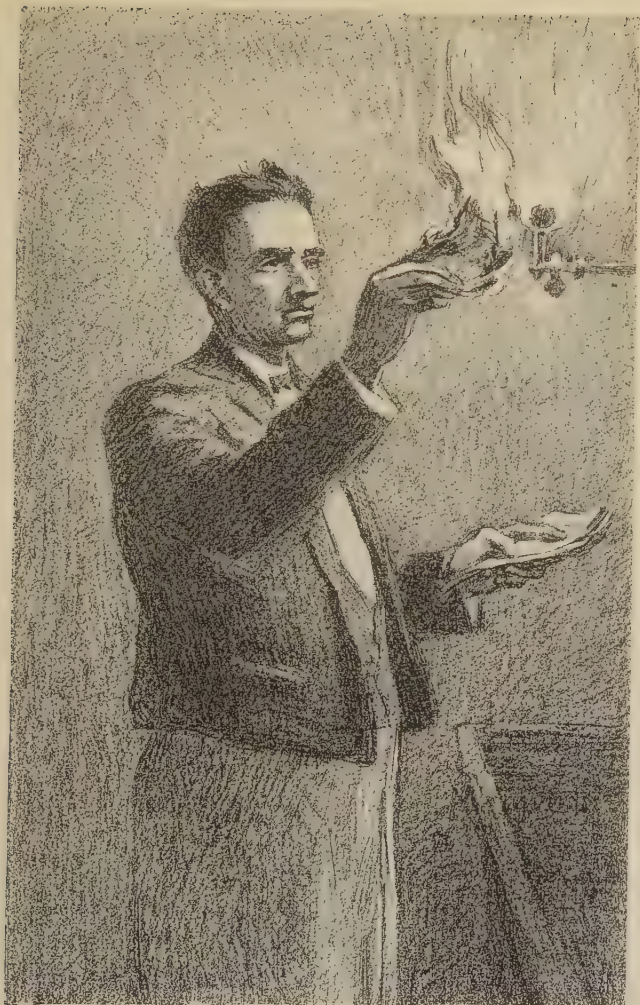
Back again in the pantry he saw through the open door the breakfast dishes on the dining-room table. Always when breakfast was over Jocaste assisted him in washing the dishes. What should he do next? Should he clear the table? Then he remembered that he was to give his presence near

by in the pantry as the excuse for unlocking the anteroom door. How stupid! It might well be that Rosalie in the kitchen should hear nothing, but was it credible that he, Gervais, in the dining-room or pantry should not hear the report of a pistol in the adjoining library? "Good God!" he cried, "can one think of everything!" He decided that it was more important to say that inasmuch as Jocaste was out he had gone to his room to await her return before clearing the table. In his room one could hear nothing, and it was while there that *it* had happened. At the worst he could only be accused of carelessness.

On the way to his room he threw the empty shell and bullet into the toilet. While flushing the closet it flashed upon him that on account of their weight they might lodge in the trap. Another mistake! At all events he was neglecting nothing. He would open the trap in the night and dispose of them otherwise.

In his room he sat down on the edge of the bed, pressing his hands to his temples.

What reason should he give for going to his room? Ordinarily he did not go to his room till after the breakfast table was cleared and the dishes put away. It was then that he dressed for the afternoon. He had forgotten the excuse of Jocaste's absence. He would have to invent something. What? his mind refused to act. After so much exertion a leaden torpor paralyzed it. Mechanically, without finding any answer, he kept repeating to himself, "What shall I do next?" That this question would be continually confronting him dismayed him. *Nom de Dieu!* the pearls! He had forgotten them! At any moment Corinne and Jocaste might return and the house would be in an uproar. Why had he encumbered himself with these cursed pearls! He took them from his pocket, gazing at them stupidly. A thousand places of concealment suggested themselves — his mattress, the chimney flue, under the carpet, the flooring — all to be discarded. But it was imperative to decide upon something quickly. All at once he recollected that a thief, disturbed in his



HE HELD THE NOTES ONE BY ONE TO THE FLAME

work and fearful of detection, often drops a portion of his booty in the haste of making his escape. The very boldness of this idea fascinated him. He ran back to the ante-room and dropped the necklace carelessly near the door leading from the library.

There remained now only the bank-notes. He was no longer thinking of Rodin's shop. The instinct of self-preservation was uppermost. What he had coveted was now a thing to be rid of. There was no time or place to secrete them from the eye of the police, for certainly the police would come. It was with them he was fighting his duel. At every sound he heard Corinne laughing with Jocaste, a laugh which resembled a death-knell; and to cheat death one is ready to abandon everything. All that a man hath will he give for his life. Lighting the gas-jet in the pantry, he held the notes one by one to the flame. Watching the grey ashes caught in the swirl of the water disappearing in the waste-pipe, he experienced an immense and malicious satisfaction. He had outwitted them!

Suddenly, in the vestibule, echoed the happy voices of Corinne and Jocaste, and his heart began to beat violently. The *thing* in the library! Should he leave its discovery to chance? — to Corinne, to Jocaste. What would an innocent man do? Springing to his feet, he rushed to the telephone and called up Doctor Marbœuf.

“Come, quickly,” he said, “an accident has happened.”

“Why did I say an accident?” he said to himself.





III

DOCTOR MARBŒUF occupied an apartment on the opposite side of the court. On receiving the assurance that he would come instantly, Gervais hurried to the anteroom to intercept Corinne. She was smiling happily, her arms full of flowers.

“Mademoiselle,” he pleaded, “you must not enter — something has happened — Monsieur Janvier is ill.”

“My uncle is ill!” exclaimed Corinne; “then let me go to him.”

But Gervais, his back against the library door, stood resolutely in the way. Although barring the door, he ardently desired to be rid of his hideous secret, to have it over, and at the same time, in pity for the young girl before him, wished to soften the shock of discovery.

Jocaste, whose presence of mind was not easily shaken, pushed him rudely aside.

"Blockhead!" she cried, "if the master is ill, why do you stand there like a stick of wood! Let us pass — run for Doctor Marbœuf!"

"Jocaste, Jocaste," he implored, "do not enter — something terrible has happened — Doctor Marbœuf is coming — in the name of God —"

Corinne, dropping her flowers, forced her way by them both. The smile had gone from her face. She ran to the chair where M. Janvier was sitting and, kneeling, took his limp hand in hers. Letting it fall instantly, she looked up at the face, uttered a piercing shriek, and fainted.

It was at this moment that Doctor Marbœuf appeared through the unlatched door of the vestibule. From the figure of Corinne, prostrate on the floor, he turned to the figure in the chair. A single glance was sufficient.

"Let us care for the living," he said to Jocaste.

With her assistance he carried Corinne



CORINNE SMILING HAPPILY, HER ARMS
FULL OF FLOWERS

into the salon. In passing, Jocaste said to Gervais: —

“Monster!”

She did not know why she uttered this accusing word. It escaped her without premeditation, a sort of vent to the horror which possessed her. At the same time a vision, like a landscape revealed by lightning, flashed upon her.

Irresolute, stunned, Gervais followed them into the salon. Without noticing him Jocaste ran for water.

“Call the police,” said Doctor Marboëuf.

At last *they* were coming. Another inevitable was to happen. That he himself should be called upon to summon the enemy did not appear strange to him. He was no longer a rational being, only a straw in the current. He went again to the telephone, benumbed, like an automaton. What he dreaded most was inertia, solitude. To be alone, to think, was intolerable. Nevertheless, to think, to be constantly on the alert, was necessary. When he regained the salon, Jocaste was unlacing Corinne’s stays.

"Leave us!" she said peremptorily.

Rosalie, a stout Picard girl, was assisting her. As yet she only knew that Corinne had fainted. Hurrying through the library she had not observed her master.

"It is nothing," she was saying comfortably; "it happens frequently in the spring of the year." And she ran to her own room for a specific in which she had great confidence.

Passing through the library she perceived M. Janvier. For a brief moment astonishment held her. What! Corinne was ill, and he slept, amid all this tumult! Drawing nearer, she uttered a low cry.

Rosalie was stout of heart as well as strong of hand. More superstitious than Jocaste but less excitable, new ideas penetrated her mind with difficulty. She retreated slowly, step by step, crossing herself and muttering under her breath, "Mother of God!" Where Jocaste would have hastened to render assistance, Rosalie recoiled in terror. "Malediction! malediction!" she repeated. Corinne, the specific, were forgotten. Her sole thought was to escape

from this room, to get to the open air, and in the frenzy of her horror she fled through the anteroom like a bewildered animal that takes the first avenue that offers.

At the door into the vestibule she ran into the arms of Pichon, inspector, who with two agents had just arrived from the neighboring police station.

"You seem to be in haste," said Pichon politely; "where are you going?"

Next to death Rosalie dreaded the uniform of the police.

"Malediction!" she repeated again, and retreated precipitately to the kitchen.

Leaving Meneval, one of the agents, in the anteroom, Pichon advanced to the door of the library. As he entered he heard an exclamation.

"What is it, Meneval?" he asked.

In his hand Meneval was holding up a necklace of pearls.

"The devil!" muttered Pichon. "Some one else has been in a hurry."

He took the pearls from Meneval's hand, examining them minutely. One was defec-

tive — no, it was only a stain. Wrapping them in his handkerchief, he put them in the pocket of his tunic.

On the threshold of the library was a profusion of spring flowers.

At this instant Doctor Marbœuf opened the door leading from the library into the salon.

“I am Doctor Marbœuf,” he said. “Nothing has been disturbed. I was waiting for you.”

“Good,” replied Pichon, nodding. Stepping over the fallen flowers he threw a rapid glance about the room. Of the occupant of the chair before the table only the grey head was visible. Because at the sound of footsteps it did not turn to interrogate the intruders, the silence became sinister.

Pichon observed that the order of the room had not been deranged. An atmosphere of peace pervaded it. Each article of furniture was in its place. An empty glass stood on the table.

“Dupin,” said Pichon to the agent ac-

companying him, "tell Meneval no one is to pass."

Dupin went back to the anteroom. No one was there. He opened the door into the vestibule and saw Meneval sitting on the step twirling his thumbs.

"No one is to pass," he said.

Meneval shrugged his shoulders scornfully, as if to say: "Why am I here? do you take me for a simpleton?"

The vestibule was separated from the passage leading from the court into the street by glass partitions. On the opposite side of the passage was the lodge of Potin, the concierge, and in the court the service door to M. Janvier's apartment. Knowing that he had not been left in the anteroom solely to twirl his thumbs, Meneval had abandoned it for the vestibule, for here he was master of both the service door in the court and that into the anteroom.

There were no curious loiterers about, for no rumor of the tragedy had yet circulated. Only Potin, surprised to see an agent sitting in M. Janvier's vestibule, had

opened the door to enquire what was going on.

"You will know in good time," Meneval had replied pompously.

Meanwhile Pichon, methodical, had taken out a pocket camera. On account of the subdued light the exposure was a long one. Having taken this first photograph he advanced on tiptoe to the door of the salon and, facing about, made another exposure. On completing this second photograph he approached the table, gazing into the face of M. Janvier. So tense was the silence, so noiseless his movements, he seemed to be afraid of waking some one.

"You have made an examination?" Doctor Marbœuf came forward.

"Only a superficial one. Monsieur Janvier was dead when I arrived."

"Who summoned you?"

"Gervais, the butler, by telephone."

"When I came in the vestibule door was unlatched," said Pichon, looking up.

"I found it so," said Doctor Marbœuf.

"I too came in without ringing."

Pichon leaned over the dead man.

"Ah! a bullet wound!"

From the occupant of the chair his gaze wandered to the shattered dial of the clock. The hour-hand was in place; only the stump of the minute-hand remained, pointing downward.

"At twenty-seven minutes past twelve," he said tersely. "At what hour did the butler call you?"

"At five minutes before one."

Pichon turned to the open drawer. He had the appearance of a dog nosing about in an unfamiliar room, his small ferret-eyes resting on the case which had contained Corinne's pearls. Taking the necklace from his pocket he fitted it carefully to the depression in the velvet with an air of satisfaction. He noted that the drawer, like the room, was in order, and his roving eye passed to the table. The cover of the ink-stand was raised and the penholder lay on the rack, its pen immaculate. "He was about to write," thought Pichon. Above the drawer was a glass containing a few

drops of water. Pichon wet his finger and carried it to his lips.

"But where the devil is the bullet!" he said, poking about among the scattered fragments of the dial-plate. "It should be here."

"Very likely," assented Doctor Marboeuf; "it entered below the right ear and after traversing the brain passed out through the left eye. Arrested by the clock, it fell probably on the table."

"It must be here, then," said Pichon; "search for it, Dupin."

Dupin got down on his hands and knees.

Among the bits of broken glass Pichon was examining a spot on the blotter. Clearly it was not an ink-spot. Pichon resorted to his magnifying-glass. Under the lens he detected a greyish substance and a small object which resembled a sliver of bone.

"Here seems to be a piece of bone," he said.

"It is possible."

Pichon cut out the spot with his penknife,

enclosing it with the sliver in an envelope which he put into his pocketbook.

"I find nothing," said Dupin.

"Nevertheless a bullet is not provided with legs or wings," said Pichon testily; "have another look. Is anything missing?" he asked, addressing Doctor Marbœuf.

"I do not know."

"You have made no enquiries?"

"That is not my business."

Pichon nodded approvingly.

"Of what calibre, I wonder, is this bullet?"

"From the nature of the wound I think that will be difficult to determine."

At this instant Corinne, leaning on Jocraste, appeared at the door of the salon.

Pichon took off his cap.

It was his habit to suspect every one, the person who enters as well as the one who flees. To suspect was not to accuse, neither was it to commit a mistake. It was a simple precaution. If he took off his cap it was because he felt involuntarily as he did when in the presence of a superior.

To all appearances from the far end of the room where Corinne stood, M. Janvier was asleep. Doctor Marbœuf, however, stepped quickly forward, placing himself between Corinne and the chair.

"I am not afraid," said Corinne.

Looking from one to the other she uttered these words as a mother might whose child was about to be taken from her. One of her hands she held upon her breast as if to repress its beating. With the other she grasped the arm of Jocaste. Tearless, she stood like a person in a trance. Doctor Marbœuf would have preferred to see her shaken with convulsive sobs.

"He was my uncle," she moaned piteously, as though apologizing for her intrusion.

Pichon, profoundly moved, and a firm believer in the repugnance of the murderer to confront his victim, eliminated Corinne completely — temporarily.

Taking her by the hand Doctor Marbœuf led her back gently, as a blind person is led, into the salon, closing the door behind him.

"Well," said Pichon, turning to Dupin.

"I find nothing," repeated Dupin.

Seated opposite the dead man, Pichon was reflecting. From time to time he rose, pacing to and fro thoughtfully. Finally, absorbed in his deductions, he passed through the anteroom into the vestibule, and, without taking any notice of Meneval, crossed the passage and entered the lodge of the concierge.

"Has any one visited the apartment of Monsieur Janvier this morning?" he asked.

"Except Doctor Marbœuf, no one," replied Potin.

"Have you seen any one leave it?"

"Only Mademoiselle Corinne and Jocaste — ah, yes, I forgot, Monsieur Janvier went out, to the bookseller — without his hat — but he returned. Without a hat, a wig in the wind is dangerous, to say nothing of a rheum," said Potin, who when nervous always became loquacious.

"Who are these people you call Corinne and Jocaste?" interrupted Pichon, disdainful of garrulity.

"Mademoiselle Corinne is the niece of Monsieur Janvier and Jocaste is the maid," replied Potin, growing more and more nervous under this cross-questioning.

"Who else lives here?"

"There is Rosalie the cook and Gervais the butler."

"And you heard nothing unusual this morning?"

Potin's eyes were opening wider and wider.

"No, monsieur, I heard nothing unusual. Is any one ill?"

"Good," said Pichon, paying no heed to this enquiry and directing his steps toward the service door. Then, seeing that Potin was following him: "I said 'good.' Go about your business."

Potin, halted thus abruptly, retreated to his lodge, whence he watched Pichon agitatedly. What was going on in M. Janvier's apartment?

Abandoning his first intention, Pichon was retracing his steps to the library. An idea had occurred to him.

Dupin, on his knees, was still searching for the bullet. To his astonishment he heard Pichon saying: —

“Never mind, Dupin, it is not here.”

Dupin was not a physical coward, only a moral one. To be left alone in this room with its ghastly tenant had been far from agreeable. Pichon’s presence was like a restorative, and he watched him with the satisfaction of the faithful dog who welcomes the return of his master.

Pichon, resorting again to his magnifying-glass, was comparing the square cut from the blotting-pad with the stain on the necklace. It was not a spot, nor a spatter, but a smooch, such as would be caused by some soiled object rubbing against the surface. He thought he perceived, too, on the pearl what resembled that grey substance he had discovered on the blotter. “Certainly,” he said to himself, putting two and two together, “a clever fellow would carry away the bullet. He would put it in his pocket with the necklace. These two in contact, even in his hand, would explain the stain.

"This necklace, — to whom does it belong?" Deep in thought, he went to the salon.

Doctor Marbœuf, bending over Corinne, was saying, "Courage, my child, courage." To which Corinne was repeating mechanically the words, "He was my uncle — he was my uncle."

Even Pichon recognized the immense difference between 'was' and 'is.'

Holding up the pearls, "Are these yours, mademoiselle?" he asked.

Her whole body rigid, Corinne stared at him like a person awaking from a dream.

"I have never seen them before," she said in a hollow voice.

"Monsieur l'inspecteur," implored Doctor Marbœuf, "I beg of you — this poor child —"

"You are right," muttered Pichon; "nevertheless one must get down to business."

Reëntering the library he went to the telephone to report the case to the Prefecture.

IV

PICHON entertained a profound respect for the magistracy. On no account would he have permitted himself to encroach upon its prerogatives. But, as first on the scene, it was his duty to observe everything, to let no detail escape him, and incidentally to omit nothing which would enhance his reputation for zeal and sagacity.

He had not failed to read on the jewel-case the name of the jeweller, nor to ask himself, since the pearls were not Corinne's, to whom, then, they belonged. Was M. Janvier indulging surreptitiously in a liaison with some siren of the theatre? Satisfying himself that both the main and service doors were safely guarded, — for he had in mind his encounter with Rosalie, — he determined to interview the jeweller.

“Meneval,” he said to the agent in the vestibule, “I will be back directly.”

It was not far to the jeweller's. Pichon read on the sign above the window the words on the jewel-case: "Langlois — Bijoutier."

Asking for the proprietor, he spread open the case on the glass counter.

"Do you recognize these pearls, Monsieur Langlois?"

"Certainly," was the instant reply. "It is the necklace purchased by Monsieur Janvier."

"I ask you if it is paid for."

"Oh," smiled M. Langlois, "that is immaterial. Monsieur Janvier gives me no anxiety."

"That is not the question," continued Pichon imperturbably.

M. Langlois had taken the necklace in his hand.

"Allow me," he said, perceiving the stained pearl, "something has —"

"Take care!" cried Pichon, arresting his movement and returning both necklace and case to his pocket.

Pichon was in uniform and, loving dearly

to be impressive, had assumed his most imposing manner. M. Langlois stared at him in astonishment. Why were the police mixing themselves up in so simple a transaction? Did they perchance believe he had concealed a blemish?

"Then they are not paid for," persisted Pichon.

"No, monsieur l'inspecteur, but monsieur promised to do so to-day. May I ask why you are making these enquiries?"

"Monsieur Langlois, it is necessary I should know the price agreed upon."

"Really," objected M. Langlois, "it seems to me that concerns only myself and my client."

"Very well," replied Pichon, "if that is your opinion. It is not mine, however. When did you deliver this necklace to Monsieur Janvier?"

"Yesterday."

"In person?"

"Monsieur Janvier himself came for it."

Pichon turned to the door, walking slowly, like a person hesitating over a bar-

gain. Perplexed and uneasy, the jeweller followed him.

Pichon's hand was on the door.

"Monsieur Langlois," he said, "you will have no occasion to regret it if on reflection you change your opinion." There was a moment of silence. "Monsieur Janvier would himself approve of it."

M. Langlois threw up his hands.

"Then why do you not ask *him*? I much prefer, if you have no objection, that he should give you the information you desire."

"There is an objection," said Pichon dryly, "since Monsieur Janvier is not living."

"Monsieur Janvier is dead!"

Pichon, opening the door, was taking a step into the street.

"Monsieur Janvier is dead! Why, only yesterday — wait a moment — you amaze me — in that case —"

Pichon smiled.

"Well, I am waiting."

"In that case — thirty thousand francs."

"Good," said Pichon. "One question more, if you please. Did Monsieur Janvier confide to you the destination of this neck-lace?"

"No. Monsieur Janvier is a new customer. I know nothing of his affairs."

Only in exceptional cases did Pichon think it compatible with his dignity to hurry. Since his promotion to the rank of inspector considerations of dignity were more than ever his concern. Just now he felt great difficulty in restraining his impatience. It was evident that if M. Janvier had engaged to pay thirty thousand francs on that day he must have made some provision to that end. Who besides M. Langlois was aware that on that particular day he was to have such a sum in his possession? — and where was that sum now? Men had been killed for less than that! He hurried back, therefore, to the Rue du Bon Diable with the ardor of the hound to whom the trail grows fresh.

He began by thoroughly searching the table at which M. Janvier was sitting.

There was a profusion of notes and drawings relating to cicada, but no trace of money. He was rewarded, however, by two discoveries. In the drawer which contained the jewel-case, under a notebook devoted to household expenses, he unearthed a clipping from the *Figaro* sounding the praises of a certain Mademoiselle Fleurette who was then delighting Paris by her wit and beauty at the Folies Dramatiques. This panegyric had so pleased M. Janvier when selecting a play for Corinne's entertainment, that he had cut it from the *Figaro* some days before as a reminder. Pichon, ignorant of this benevolent intention, drew a conclusion which would have caused M. Janvier to blush with indignation. In Pichon's world the stage was frequently more alluring than the home, and every one knows that folly is no monopoly of youth. What more likely than that this necklace, whose existence was concealed from Corinne, should be destined for a divinity of another Pantheon? Pichon acknowledged that this supposition led as yet to nothing enlightening. But every-

thing was important, and he made a mental note of it.

His second discovery was more to the point — a bank-book showing that M. Janvier had an account with the *Crédit Lyonnais*. He went at once to the telephone. With an institution of this importance it was necessary to be explicit.

“I am Pichon, Inspector of Police, Second Arrondissement. Monsieur Janvier, 13, Rue du Bon Diable, died this morning. I wish to ascertain if he withdrew recently from his account the sum of thirty thousand francs.”

After some delay another voice replied: Yes, Monsieur Janvier had received that sum by messenger that morning. If Inspector Pichon wished to verify the fact he had only to call at the bank to see the receipt in Monsieur Janvier’s own handwriting.

“Thank you,” said Pichon, and he hung up the receiver.

So far as the bank is concerned, he reflected, a receipt is an excellent thing. It covers all responsibility. If M. Janvier,

sitting there deaf to all enquiries, were alive, he might also absolve the messenger. But M. Janvier was not only dead, he had been murdered. Did anything prevent a messenger, after possessing himself of this absolving receipt, from making way with both M. Janvier and the thirty thousand francs? Clearly not. He would return the receipt to his employers and say: "Here is the proof of my fidelity — as for the rest I know nothing."

While resuming his search, Pichon's thoughts revolved persistently about this messenger.

It was his boast that he could search a live man even to his boots without his knowing it. In the case of a dead man nothing interfered with thoroughness. But he found only a piece of one hundred sous, a pair of spectacles, and in a well-worn pocketbook a receipt for a loge for the 9th of May at the Folies Dramatiques. On perceiving this, Pichon smiled superciliously at the mute figure in the chair, filled with that scornful compassion which invades the breast

of one who uncovers the weaknesses of his fellows.

"Dupin," he said, "call the concierge; I wish to have a word with him." And following Dupin into the anteroom, Pichon waited.

Potin, bewildered by all these comings and goings, and holding the police in great awe, presented himself with a bold face, but inwardly perturbed.

Pichon worshipped formality.

"Your name," he said severely.

"Potin," replied the concierge, twirling his cap nervously in his hands.

"Monsieur Potin, when I interrogated you lately you made no mention of the messenger from the Crédit Lyonnais who came this morning to see Monsieur Janvier."

Potin, for whom the simplest question in the mouth of an agent of the police was an accusation, began to tremble violently.

"A messenger!" he stammered; "I saw no messenger."

"It happens sometimes that one does not see what it is inconvenient to remember. Think again, Potin."

"Positively," began Potin, gesticulating wildly.

"Take care!" interrupted Pichon; "what you say may prove disagreeable for you."

Potin could not articulate. What were the police doing in M. Janvier's apartment? Why were they questioning him? Innocence, which should have fortified him, added to his confusion.

Pichon watched him narrowly. He was thinking of the messenger. Was this fellow in collusion with him? If so, he was putting him on his guard.

"It may be," he said, softening his tone, "you were absent, on some errand."

Potin grasped this conjecture like a drowning man.

"In truth, that is the case — every morning I go to the creamery for the milk — you have only to ask Mademoiselle Rosalie — she —"

"Ah!" interrupted Pichon again, his sus-

picious reviving; "so you make love to Mademoiselle Rosalie."

Seeing pitfalls on every side, Potin threw up his hands in despair.

"Oh, monsieur l'inspecteur, only a little service, to oblige her."

Pichon smiled sardonically. Between the messenger, Rosalie, and the concierge what understanding existed? He resolved to try the effect of a sudden disclosure.

"Calm yourself, Potin. You know, I suppose, that Monsieur Janvier is dead."

"Grand Dieu!" exclaimed the unhappy Potin; "Monsieur Janvier is dead! What a misfortune!" Tears were gathering in his eyes. "The poor gentleman! What a misfortune! So it was for this Doctor Marbœuf — and I suspected nothing!"

If ever the astonishment of innocence was depicted on a human countenance, it was plainly visible on his. Distrustful of tears and tenacious of ideas, Pichon wavered.

"At what hour do you go to the creamery, Potin?"

"Before the breakfast — always before the breakfast —"

"I ask at what hour," repeated Pichon tersely.

"Between eleven and twelve, monsieur l'inspecteur, except Sunday, when Monsieur Janvier breakfasts in the country —"

"Good," snapped Pichon, cutting him short; "return to your lodge. Keep your eye on this fellow," he said to Meneval, "I am going to the Prefecture."

Pichon was now in greater haste than ever. His mind was in a ferment. Where were the thirty thousand francs which M. Janvier had received that morning? They had been received, since there was a receipt. Had M. Janvier put them into the drawer? Probably, for the necklace certainly had been taken from that drawer. The empty case was proof of it. Then probably, also, the money. Had the murderer left the record of his fingers on the drawer? When Pichon said 'murderer' he said 'messenger.' Who else knew of this money?

On returning from the Prefecture, Pichon

had a satchel in his hand. He had driven by way of the *Crédit Lyonnais*. Armed with a requisition from the Prefect, he had secured the receipt for the thirty thousand francs. He learned also that it was one o'clock when the receipt was returned to the cashier. If it was between eleven o'clock and noon, during the concierge's absence, that the messenger had arrived at M. Janvier's apartment, what was he doing in that interval of more than an hour before presenting himself at the bank? Pichon had an inspiration.

The messengers of the *Crédit Lyonnais* wore a uniform when on duty, and were easily recognized. The Rue du Bon Diable, composed of small shops and modest apartments, was not one frequented by the blue-and-silver dress of bank messengers. Dismissing his cab at the entrance of the street, he sat down at a table on the sidewalk before the *Café de l'Abondance* and ordered a sirop. When paying the waiter he remarked casually: —

“Bring me a journal of any kind. I will

sit here awhile, for I am expecting a friend, a messenger from the Crédit Lyonnais."

"Then you are too late," replied the waiter. "He was here, but after a while he went away."

"The devil!" said Pichon, looking at his watch; "at what hour?"

"I come on duty at noon. It must have been half after noon or more when I served him."

"Then I might as well be off," sighed Pichon. "I give you the change, my friend, for your good memory."

Pichon crossed the street deep in thought. He still had the greater part of the afternoon before him. He would have to make the best of the time at his disposal, for in the morning the magistrate would begin his investigation.

Going directly to the library, he took from his satchel a camel's-hair brush and a small round box resembling a pepper-caster, from which he sprinkled a fine white powder on the knob and sides of the drawer. Spreading the powder gently with the brush

over the surface, he saw with satisfaction numerous finger-prints. Diving again into the recesses of his satchel, he extracted a small electric camera and photographed them carefully. These processes he repeated on the fingers of the dead man. This done, he sent Dupin for Doctor Marbœuf and gave permission for the removal of the body and the necessary autopsy. Then, in one of those aberrations of the mind by which a man absorbed in work or faced with peril, thinks of inconsequent trifles, he asked: —

“How is mademoiselle?”

“She is sleeping.”

Pichon nodded and, repacking his satchel, went to the servants' quarters.



V

JOCASTE, like most of her sex, possessed a number of caprices of the usual ill-assorted variety. She also possessed the restraining quality of good sense. She had given mature thought and deliberation to the future, settling in advance, so far as is possible in a world of mutation, exactly what that future was to be. Marriage was the cardinal article of her programme, and while propinquity had its share of influence, the natural docility of Gervais had had

much to do with the selection of her partner, for the vivacity of her temperament tended toward empire rather than submission. It was she who had discovered that M. Rodin was about to retire from business, and reasoning that twelve years of faithful service justified more than the meagre reward of mere wages, she had opened her heart to her benevolent master.

In spite of his shyness, perhaps because of it, M. Janvier was not insensible to feminine promptings. Shyness had saved him from entanglements of a purely amorous character, but in matters of business he was less on his guard, and as he rejoiced to see those about him happy, he had so far listened to Jocaste's arguments as to promise to take into consideration the opening presented by M. Rodin's retirement. Jocaste, however, was not content with vagueness. At her age procrastination was certainly the thief of time. But this matter of M. Rodin was what she called a *grosse affaire*. She could not conduct it as she did the purchase of M. Janvier's cravats, when, to take him

into her confidence was to encounter innumerable objections as to color and material and price. The shortest way to a decision was to purchase one without consulting him. He would find it in his drawer the next morning and appear wearing it at breakfast as satisfied as if he had selected it himself, or more probably not suspecting it was a new one. M. Rodin's stock in trade, every detail of which, down to the smallest package of needles, Jocaste was familiar with, was too large to acquire by so brusque a method. It was far better, having dropped the seed into the ground, to water it judiciously and leave the rest to M. Janvier's good disposition.

While dusting her master's desk one morning her patience was rewarded by hearing him say: —

“Jocaste, I have made a new will, and I have not forgotten that little affair of which you spoke to me.”

“God forbid that I should look forward to such a calamity, dear master,” said Jocaste, continuing her dusting.



WHILE DUSTING HER MASTER'S DESK ONE MORNING
HER PATIENCE WAS REWARDED

"I do not consider death a calamity," replied M. Janvier.

"That is all very well for a philosopher like yourself," said Jocaste; "as for me —"

"As for you, what?" asked M. Janvier, watching with some dismay the inroads of the duster among his papers.

"As for me," replied Jocaste demurely, "I wish you the longest life possible."

M. Janvier was touched.

"Have you considered, Jocaste, that in marrying Gervais and in acquiring Rodin's shop you deprive me of two faithful friends?"

"Since we are but three doors off, the calamity is not so great as death."

M. Janvier smiled.

"At how much does this Rodin value the good-will?" he asked, presently.

"It is better not to ask him," said the prudent Jocaste, "but to make him a low offer. In that way by degrees one gets together."

"Really, I believe you are right. You have a long head, Jocaste."

Not having brought her plans exactly to

the point desired, Jocaste had not confided this conversation to Gervais, whose impatience jarred with her prudence. But it was impossible for one of her practical mind not to remember it and not to speculate. Shocked as she was by her master's death, the manner of which added horror to grief, she could not refrain from thinking of its effect upon her future. She had hoped to induce him to anticipate that future — and it was here! One must eat and drink even in misfortune, and after every death there is a to-morrow for those who remain. It was not her intention to breathe a word of her hopes at this time, but while assisting Doctor Marbœuf, distraught as she was, they fluttered near by like swallows about a burning chimney.

In her journeyings to and fro between Corinne's room and the kitchen she had encountered Gervais, who appeared crushed almost to the verge of insanity. She had not realized he was so attached to his master. His condition was pitiable, and what most affected her was that he should follow

her about, to Corinne's door, to the kitchen, wherever she went, clinging to her skirts like a dog to the heels. Was it any wonder? What was it she had said to him in that flash of revealing intuition when reason forsook her? Monster! yes, that was what she had said. How could she have been so cruel! What had put such a thought into her head! Poor Gervais! Could any one have peace till that cruel word was unsaid? Remorse and pity rendered her miserable, and in her misery *the thought*, indomitable, recurred incessantly like a lancing pain.

When driven so peremptorily from the salon by Jocaste, Gervais did not know which way to turn. The library, tenanted by his victim, was impossible. Wandering restlessly from place to place, he abandoned each refuge in turn. In his own room he asked himself if an innocent man would thus desert every one at such a crisis. He longed to lift the oven cover to see if the napkin was consumed, but Rosalie was there and he did not dare to. Through the door of the pantry he saw the breakfast

dishes on the table and began mechanically to remove them. How idiotic even to think of doing such a thing! Such callousness was in itself an accusation. Back again in the pantry, he sat down, listening. At times he heard footsteps. Doubtless *they* had come. What did it matter? The sooner over the better. Yet he began again to arrange his defence. Above all, the reproach of Jocaste tormented him. What could she have meant by pronouncing that accusing word? Nothing, since she knew nothing; and he kept repeating to himself, "It is impossible, impossible." He examined his hands, his coat, the shelf and cupboard, but found nothing incriminating.

But if he was innocent, some one was guilty. Who, then? Upon whom could he shift his intolerable burden? Involuntarily, without any serious purpose, there passed swiftly before him the image of each inmate of the house, and at the same time he revolted, saying to himself, "How shameful! and how absurd!" Corinne, Jocaste, Rosalie, Potin — ah! Potin! At the thought of

him a fury swept him. It was Potin who had borrowed his revolver. It was Potin who, on his return from his excursion, had offered to clean it and who had left it there on the pantry shelf. But for Potin it would have been in his bureau in his room. It was because it was there under his very eyes, thrust as it were by Potin into his very hand when he 'saw red,' that it had happened! Cursed Potin!

Suddenly, in the midst of his rage, he became calm. The messenger, whom he had admitted that morning! He had under his arm a portfolio. Undoubtedly it was he who had brought the bank-notes. Slowly a project, like a growing light, began to form in his mind. The messenger! — who, tempted by so large a sum, had first robbed and then murdered — no, who had first murdered and then robbed. He argued the question as though he personally had nothing to do with the matter and was disinterestedly seeking the solution of a problem. It was true that if the messenger was bent upon robbery, he was under no necessity of de-

livering the bank-notes. He had only to make off with them. But might not the thought of robbery have come without premeditation when alone in the presence of a feeble old man — as it had come to him? All at once he recollected that the messenger had come before breakfast and a bitter laugh escaped him. “Am I really mad,” he thought, “to invent things contrary to reason?”

The door moved softly on its hinges. Alert to every sound, he started. It was Jocaste.

“Gervais, my poor Gervais,” she said, sitting down beside him and taking his hand soothingly in hers. He seemed to her like a man in a drunken stupor. “Mon Dieu! Gervais, speak to me.” He made no answer. “Corinne is asleep. Doctor Marbœuf has given her a sleeping-potion.” He appeared not to be listening. She put his hand against her heart. “Tell me at least what happened — when we went for the flowers the master was so gay —” He drew his hand away, fixing his gloomy eyes upon hers.

“Stop! Why did you say ‘monster’?”

"Good Heavens! Gervais — does one know what one says in such a case?"

His manner terrified her.

Gervais smiled. His secret was struggling to escape. The desire to unbosom himself suffocated him.

"But you said it — why?"

Jocaste shuddered.

"You do not believe that I — that —"

"Yes, that is what I believe."

"What folly!" Refusing to comprehend, she comprehended. "Are you mad to conceive such an idea?"

"What idea?" he persisted, stubbornly.

She began to tremble violently. It was as if he was forcing her hand inch by inch into burning coals.

"Gervais, Gervais, you frighten me — why do you put such thoughts into my head?"

"It is not I who put them there."

"Yes, yes, it is you," she wailed, wringing her hands.

He smiled again mockingly, burying his face in his palms.

"What does it matter, since you admit it?"

A profound pity swept over her. Had what he knew, what he had seen, utterly unhinged his reason? With all her strength she fought against him, against herself, pulling his hands from his face.

"Gervais! Let us have done with such nonsense! I have something to tell you."

The mocking smile on his lips changed to alarm.

"Jocaste, what are you saying? — quick — you torture me."

She no longer knew what it was she was saying. She had but one desperate purpose, to escape what she read in his eyes, what was strangling her. "God forgive me for speaking of it at such a time — but are we to blame?" She seized his hands again. "Why do you look at me in that way? Listen, Gervais, the master has made a will — he himself told me — after all, one must live" — she stumbled on incoherently — "and with our economies — Gervais — Gervais —"



PICHON, INSPECTOR

He had listened at first in silence, not comprehending. Then the blood rushed to his temples. A will! What imprudence! Was she determined to ruin him? The first thought of the police when a crime was committed was to seek the motive.

"But I did not know of that!" he cried, furious. "You will swear to that, Jocaste." Good God! What was he saying, to so compromise himself! He got up abruptly, with sudden resolution. "Go, leave me — I have something to do."

"Why did I say that?" he thought despairingly. "Why not tell her the bullet is in the trap, since it was that I was thinking of?"

For an instant Jocaste did not move. Her limbs refused to obey her. What was it he wished her to swear? Could it, after all, be possible? At the same time a new fear possessed her. What was it he had to do? Springing to her feet, she ran after him down the corridor. At the door of his room she tapped gently, then frantically. No answer. She pushed the door open. The

room was empty. Retracing her steps, she listened. Except the beating of her heart she heard nothing — yes, there was a noise in the toilet. Fear mastered her. “Gervais! Gervais!” she cried, forcing the door open.

He was kneeling on the floor, a wrench in his hand.

“Get out!” he shouted, advancing upon her menacingly. “Am I to have no peace?” And he slammed the door in her face.

Alone in his room a few minutes later, he hid the bullet under some soiled clothes in his wardrobe. The empty shell had been swept away in the rush of the water.

Sitting on the edge of his bed, he tried to think, to recollect what he had said. He felt cold, and lying down pulled the coverlid over him.

“My God!” he moaned, losing consciousness, “what a place to hide anything!”

When he awoke, Pichon was standing by the window, a revolver in his hand.



VI

IN proceeding to the servants' quarters Pichon had in mind to question Gervais about the messenger. He did not send for him, because he wished also to investigate personally the rooms yet unvisited.

Standing on no ceremony with closed doors, he first entered the room of Gervais, where he saw a man apparently asleep — a

fact which amazed him. A man who could sleep under such circumstances in the middle of the afternoon either possessed an easy conscience or was a hardened criminal. Satisfying himself that this man, who could be no other than the butler mentioned by the concierge, was really asleep, he advanced cautiously. In the upper drawer of the bureau, in plain view, was the case containing the revolver. "Ah!" he said to himself, "if we have no bullet, at least we have a pistol." He was examining it when Gervais sat up on the bed. The click of the lock had awakened him.

Refreshed by sleep, Gervais had also regained his composure. In unconsciousness the horror of his crime had slipped from him. In its place was a calculating cunning.

"So," he said to himself, "it is you — come on then, you and I — let us have it out."

Holding the revolver in his left hand, Pichon tapped it lightly with the other.

"This weapon is yours, Monsieur Gervais?"

"Why not?" said Gervais, returning Pichon's gaze steadily.

Pichon shrugged his shoulders.

"You keep it in excellent condition," he said, sighting through the barrel; "and you are not sparing in oil — to prevent rust, doubtless."

"Naturally."

"For the moment," continued Pichon with mock politeness, replacing the revolver in its case and slipping both in his pocket, "if you have no objections, I will borrow it."

"None whatever," replied Gervais with equal urbanity.

Pichon was puzzled.

"It appears to me that you select a singular moment to take a nap."

Gervais shrugged his shoulders in turn. A wave of anger swept over him, but he repressed it.

"If I can assist you, I am at your service."

"Dame!" thought Pichon; "he talks too smoothly."

Talking was precisely what Gervais was resolved not to do. He would answer questions, but volunteer nothing.

Uneasy, Pichon assumed his offhand manner.

"It was you, I presume, who admitted this morning the messenger from the *Crédit Lyonnais*."

To be caught in falsehoods was folly. Gervais determined to adhere strictly to the truth — when possible.

"Yes, it was I."

He was on the point of adding that it was his duty to answer the bell in the anteroom, but refrained. He would volunteer nothing. Let them dig it out bit by bit!

"From the *Crédit Lyonnais*," repeated Pichon significantly.

"As to that I cannot say. It is you who said so."

"He had under his arm a portfolio, had he not?"

"Very likely, since you say he came from the *Crédit Lyonnais*."

"Then you did not observe it."

"My faith, I cannot swear positively. It is possible."

"At what hour did he present himself?"

"Before breakfast. I was laying the table."

"And afterwards, when he went out, you accompanied him?"

Gervais hesitated. As a matter of fact, after ushering the messenger into the library, he had resumed his duties. True, he had heard him depart. But was it necessary to say so? There flashed through his mind the thought that it was possible for the messenger to have concealed himself in the library after taking leave of M. Janvier.

"No, I did not see him again."

"Nevertheless, he went out," persisted Pichon, the same thought which occurred to Gervais occurring also to him. "Did not Monsieur Janvier breakfast afterwards as usual?"

"Oh, yes, as usual."

"Obviously, then, he left before breakfast."

Gervais made no answer. If it was obvi-

ous, it was because Pichon was reasoning as he did.

"Unless he left after breakfast," added Pichon, "which is not probable."

"It is possible," said Gervais. "After breakfast I came to my room."

Let him think so if he chooses, he thought.

Beyond the bed was a wardrobe with doors. Pichon opened them carelessly. Below the garments suspended on the pegs was a heap of soiled linen.

"He is going to find it," thought Gervais.

But no, after looking in, he closed the doors.

Still thinking of the messenger, "What was the errand of this messenger?" Pichon asked.

"How should I know?"

Pichon took a step toward the corridor, then stopped.

"When did you last clean your revolver?"

"Ask Potin, it was he who cleaned it."

He had answered without reflection, and he regretted it. Why had he mentioned

Potin? Potin would say he had left the revolver on the shelf in the pantry. He should have said he had forgotten.

Pichon sat down.

"What you say interests me," he said.

"Why does Potin clean your revolver?"

"Because it was he who last used it."

"Ah! so it was he who used it last. Explain that to me, if you please."

"He borrowed it Sunday. Potin loves to shoot sparrows in the country."

"So Potin went into the country on Sunday. What a lucky fellow! And did you accompany him?"

"No. Monsieur Janvier breakfasted out with mademoiselle on Sunday. He gave Potin a holiday, provided I would take his place."

"You are a happy family here," said Pichon. "On his return, then, Potin gives the revolver back to you."

"Yes, after cleaning it."

"He is a considerate fellow, this Potin. *When* did he give it back to you?"

"I do not remember! — some days afterwards."

"Of course, of course," assented Pichon; "it requires time to clean a revolver properly. How many days — to-day being Friday?"

"Really, I do not remember."

"Then, since you do not remember, it must have been Monday, or perhaps Tuesday." Gervais made no reply. "If, for example, it were to-day — one does not forget what happens to-day. But that is of no importance. *Where* does he return it to you? Sometimes, by recalling the circumstances which attend an event, the memory comes to life. Let us suppose he hands it to you —"

"I tell you I do not remember," snapped Gervais, exasperated by Pichon's persistency.

Pichon got up.

"Possibly Potin will remember," he said musingly. At the door he paused.

"You did not find it here, in your drawer?"

Gervais saw that evasion was useless. Potin would say he left it in the pantry.

"No, I found it in the pantry."

"Did he tell you he had left it there?"

"Yes, he told me."

"I am wondering why he thought it necessary to tell you," said Pichon with an affectation of perplexity. "Did he perchance hide it in some cupboard?"

"It was on the shelf," said Gervais wearily.

"Then you had seen it before being told."

"No, I had not seen it."

"Let us see. Since you had not seen it, it must be that after Potin left it on the shelf and before telling you it was there, you had not gone to the pantry — for in that case you would have seen it. Now I understand. Potin lays it down on the shelf, then goes at once to tell you — in the kitchen, perhaps, or here in your room."

"I remember now. I was in the library."

Pichon looked up from the floor.

"Monsieur Janvier was writing this morning in the library. A man who is writing does not like to be disturbed. Was it not while Monsieur Janvier was at the book-

seller's that you and Potin were in the library?"

"Very likely."

Pichon went on as if thinking aloud.

"Then it was to-day. It is astonishing how soon one forgets anything. But since it is now explained, no harm is done. Potin comes back from the creamery. He sees Monsieur Janvier go out. It must be, then, before twelve o'clock, when Monsieur Janvier sits down to breakfast, that all this happens. Did you go into the library to add a word, you and Potin, to Monsieur Janvier's manuscript?"

"I went in with Monsieur Janvier's glass of hot water," cried Gervais, irritated beyond control.

"To be sure, I forgot, I should have remembered, for I saw it on the table. Pardon my little joke. Everything is now clear as daylight." And Pichon went out without saying anything further, apparently quite satisfied.

Listening, Gervais counted his steps in the corridor. He had stopped at the room

occupied by Rosalie. Stealing softly from his bed, Gervais groped about in the loose linen. Feeling the bullet in his fingers a smile of disgust came to his lips. "How stupid of him!" he muttered; "he had only to lift — " Voices arrested him. What should he do with it? Was he to stand there like an idiot with the bullet in his hand? He ran to the window, opened it quickly, and hurled the bullet as far as he could into the court.

Meanwhile, standing at Rosalie's door, Pichon saw two women whispering together.

Jocaste, ordinarily so self-poised, had been weeping. She had not confided her fears to Rosalie. She was suffering in silence, unable to throw off her load of suspicion or the recollection of Gervais's brutality. She endeavored in vain to recall the Gervais of other days, the real Gervais. The sight of Pichon brought back her terror and she shrank away, trembling.

Rosalie, her hands on her hips, stood up defiantly. It seemed as though these two had exchanged natures. Her arms akimbo,

she strode forward, glaring at Pichon insolently, her peasant blood afire. This man had charged her with wishing to escape! Furious, her fear had turned to hatred.

Pichon was smiling. With women, as with cats, a gloved hand was necessary.

"Good-day again, Mademoiselle Rosalie," he said.

"What do you want?" she cried angrily. "Are we to have you prowling about here forever?"

"You have your duties, I have mine. You also possess the advantage of being able to assist me, while I, in your department —" Pichon's gesture indicated a sad incompetency.

"I know nothing," she said sullenly.

"Oh, very well, if you know nothing you have only to say so to-morrow to Monsieur Sartain, the magistrate. He believes readily all that is told him."

Sarcasm was lost upon Rosalie. Partly mollified by Pichon's manner, and partly awed by the word 'magistrate,' she relented a little,

"Should I know anything? Ask Gervais — we were in the kitchen together — Oh, to think that at that very moment, perhaps, while we were talking —" In her honest eyes the tears were gathering.

"Yes," said Pichon, "life is very sad. No one knows what his end will be. So you were talking together, you and Gervais."

"Of nothing, I assure you. He was burning an old rag in the oven. I said, 'Why do you not give it to the ragman who comes —'" She stopped abruptly. Jocaste, from behind, was pulling her skirt.

"You are right," said Pichon, retreating; "it is a sin to burn even an old rag. Pardon me for disturbing you."

Jocaste had risen. Pale as death, she followed him to the door.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Mademoiselle Corinne," she stammered.

Together they walked down the corridor, Jocaste in advance. At the door of the kitchen she hesitated. Pichon also halted.

"Well," he said, his hand on the knob,

"do you expect to find mademoiselle in the kitchen?"

She gave him a malignant look in which dread was mingled with hatred.

He watched her till she disappeared at the end of the passage. "This one knows more than the other," he thought. Then he went into the kitchen.

Poking about in the ashes of the oven he fished up from between two pieces of unburnt coke a charred fragment of greasy napkin. He examined it eagerly for traces of blood, but found none. From the position of the assassin behind the chair, it was not to be expected. Nevertheless, he put the fragment into the envelope with the square cut from the blotter. For why does one burn anything?

Returning to the library, he met Doctor Marbœuf, who with two assistants was superintending the removal of the body.

"Look at this, if you please," he said, giving Doctor Marbœuf his magnifying-glass and producing the necklace.

Doctor Marbœuf went to the window.

"And this." Pichon took from the envelope the piece of blotting-paper.

"In this light I cannot be positive," said Doctor Marbœuf. "It is quite dry. This stain on the blotter might be matter from the brain. It resembles the stain on the pearl; indeed," he added, "they seem to be identical."

When they had gone, Pichon placed M. Janvier's chair, which had been displaced, in its original position, and sitting down opposite, his elbows on the table and his chin in his hands, gazed before him as if M. Janvier were still there and he could interrogate him.





VII

PICHON prided himself on being a logician. But details bewildered him, and interrogation points, of which he saw many, vexed him. It was always necessary for Pichon to begin at the beginning. In endeavoring to reconstitute the tragedy, therefore, he first laid down the premise that M. Janvier was dead. As to that he was positive. M. Janvier had not died a

natural death. He had not to wait for the Latin words with which the autopsy would bristle to be convinced of that. Neither had M. Janvier committed suicide. Very well, then, it followed that he had been killed by some one. By whom? That there was such a person, perhaps several, was a mathematical certainty. It angered him to realize that at this stage of his reasoning the logic of mathematics failed him. Pichon much preferred the game to the chase, to lay his heavy hand on the criminal in the act than to pursue him by logical processes.

At all events, he said to himself, there was no struggle. M. Janvier had died in his chair without moving. What follows? That whether the assassin entered by the door from the salon facing him, or by the door leading to the anteroom and dining-room behind him, M. Janvier was unconscious of danger. A member of the household might have entered by either door without arousing suspicion, but if the murderer was a stranger, he must have approached from behind, by the door to the anteroom. A

stranger might certainly have profited by the unlatched door. When and why was the safety latch drawn? Was it a custom of the house? Had M. Janvier himself left it open when going to the bookseller's, to facilitate his return, or had some one within done so to permit the entrance of a confederate or to divert suspicion from himself?

Pichon scratched his head in perplexity. Beginning over again, he started with the fact that M. Janvier had died without a struggle. The murderer, therefore, was not surprised in the act of robbery. M. Janvier had returned to his work and was himself surprised by the intruder. The crime, then, was a deliberate one, and deliberation implies a motive. What motive?

Pichon rose, and stationing himself in the position from which the shot was fired behind the chair, he endeavored to see into the open drawer. No, he could see nothing of its contents. Whether open or not, the murderer must have known what it contained. The idea that, unprovoked, he would kill on the bare chance of finding

something, was improbable. Furthermore, if he had expected to find the room unoccupied, he might have retired as he came. There was nothing to show that M. Janvier was aware of his presence. No, he had persisted and therefore knew the contents of the drawer. What were these contents? Undoubtedly the necklace, whose case had been left behind as a useless encumbrance, and probably also the bank-notes, since they were delivered to M. Janvier that morning and were missing. How did the murderer obtain this knowledge? One person certainly possessed this knowledge — the messenger. Pichon could not rid his mind of this messenger. It was an obsession. But the messenger had presented himself before breakfast, and as M. Janvier had breakfasted as usual, the murder must have been committed afterwards. Could the messenger have secreted himself in the mean time? No one had seen him depart. But if robbery was his object, why had he delivered the bank-notes at all, and why should any one who had committed both

robbery and murder loiter in a near-by café with his plunder in his pocket? An honest man would return at once to his employers. Yet he had not done so.

There was also Gervais who admitted the messenger, who in M. Janvier's absence, after the delivery of the bank-notes, was in the library with Potin. Were they in collusion with the messenger? Or had they independently seen the money in the open drawer of the table?

That the assassin had some grudge to settle, taking the necklace and bank-notes to throw suspicion upon a common thief, Pichon rejected as altogether too fantastic.

This necklace! Meneval had found it at the foot of the portière by the door into the anteroom. A stranger from without might have dropped it in the haste of flight, but unless he had a confederate within how explain his knowledge of the drawer's contents? If the assassin was one of the household — Pichon was thinking now of Gervais — no reason for haste existed. Corinne and Jocaste were out. He had the house to him-

self. There was only Rosalie in the kitchen. Why the devil was she in such a hurry! Content with the bank-notes, had the pearls been abandoned purposely to divert suspicion?

Involved in the mesh of his reasoning, Pichon wiped his perspiring brow. Between Gervais, Potin, and the messenger, he wavered, always coming back to the latter. No one had seen him leave, therefore he had remained — concealed perhaps behind the portière.

For whom is this necklace? No one knows anything about it, not even the jeweller from whom it is purchased. Why does an old man immersed in scientific researches purchase pearls at thirty thousand francs and engage a loge at the Folies Dramatiques? Naturally Mademoiselle Innocence knows nothing of these proceedings!

Pacing to and fro, his hands crossed behind his back, Pichon resumed his monologue.

“Before breakfast in this room were thirty thousand francs, a fact known to

two persons, Monsieur Janvier and the messenger — and perhaps also to Gervais. This messenger is admitted by Gervais and goes away mysteriously, unobserved by any one. At what hour? After breakfast? Was it with the connivance of Gervais and perhaps also of Potin that he conceals himself during breakfast, till after Corinne and Jocaste leave, and then departs unnoticed? If Gervais discovered the bank-notes by accident when taking the glass of water to the library, there is no need to involve the messenger; or did he know beforehand, and was the messenger a partner in guilt? Was it by chance or by design that at the very hour of the crime Jocaste goes out with Corinne — Jocaste, who is so anxious to ascertain whether the dishcloth is consumed! Even when divided among three or four persons thirty thousand francs is a pretty sum! And no one hears the report of the pistol! Rosalie in the kitchen, who seeks to escape, and Gervais in the pantry, who burns rags, are they deaf?"

Pichon took the pistol from his pocket.

It certainly did not appear to have been used recently. If the crime was committed with this weapon, then it must have been cleaned a second time, between twenty-seven minutes past twelve and the arrival of Doctor Marbœuf at five minutes before one, and by some one in the apartment. To prove this the bullet was necessary. Where the devil was this bullet? That it lodged there on the table is indubitable. Seeing it before his eyes, the murderer makes off with it.

Pichon sighed.

“What are these doctors good for,” he exclaimed, “who cannot judge from a wound the calibre of a bullet?”

And the necklace on the floor — how account for it? Was it thrown there deliberately by one of the household who, satisfied with the bank-notes, thought thus to divert suspicion from himself upon an outsider? Or was it dropped by a thief from without in his hurried flight? In either case, to explain the stained pearl it must have been in contact with the bullet.

Pichon endeavored to put himself in the place of the murderer.

"I secrete the necklace with the bank-notes in my pocket. I see the bullet on the table and put it also in my pocket. What happens then? I take the necklace from my pocket and throw it purposely on the floor, to cast suspicion upon another. Then, necessarily, I am one of the household. If I hold these objects in my hand, would it not be the bullet rather than the necklace which I would let fall? Besides, does a thief go into the street with his booty in his hands? No, it is in my pocket. I am one of the servants. Heavens!" he thought, "how many things are possible!"

Once more he went back to the beginning, obstinately.

"This morning, in this apartment, were thirty thousand francs. Either this murder was committed by a stranger who has carried them off with him, or by an inmate of the house. In the latter case they are here, for no one has been permitted to leave."

He went to the door and called Meneval.

“Meneval, we will have a look about, and we will begin with that fellow Potin.”

Potin's lodge, ransacked after Pichon's most approved method, yielded nothing. From the lodge they passed to the ante-room. An old surtout, somewhat thread-bare, hung on a peg under M. Janvier's hat. From its pocket Meneval produced a long envelope. For a moment Pichon stood aghast. The bank-notes were found and there had been no robbery!

Tearing open the envelope, his favorite ejaculation escaped him.

“The devil!” he exclaimed; “the will of Monsieur Janvier!”

Unrestrained by scruples, Pichon devoured M. Janvier's last wishes with all the interest of a beneficiary — the more easily as no legal phrases clouded its meaning.

Plainly two persons benefited by its author's removal, Corinne and Jocaste. Hardened as he was beyond surprise at the deceitfulness of appearances, his thought rested lightly upon Corinne. That a young girl should seek to hasten an event for which

she had only to wait tranquilly was a supposition altogether monstrous. But Jocaste! So she wished to embark in trade, which required capital! This new idea, working in his mind like a ferment, turned his thoughts from the messenger to Gervais and Jocaste, and he prosecuted his search with quickened energy. Prolonged far into the evening, it proved fruitless. Persuaded that the thirty thousand francs were not in the apartment, his troubled thought centred again on the messenger. No nook or cranny had been neglected — except the room of Corinne. At its door Pichon experienced the only scruple which had ever embarrassed him.

While sweeping the court in the early morning following, Potin picked up a small piece of flattened lead. He turned it over many times before admitting that it was a bullet. Far from having recovered from the fright caused by Pichon's questions, he was more alarmed than ever. The manner of M. Janvier's death was now known to the whole neighborhood. There had been a murder! When going for the milk the pre-



POTIN, SWEEPING THE COURT, FINDS THE
BULLET

vious evening he learned that Pichon had taken the precaution to verify his assertion that he was at the creamery at the hour the messenger called. And now they were searching his room! Of what did they suspect him? His possessions had been turned topsy-turvy without any explanation, for Pichon was uncommunicative. Naturally voluble, these proceedings rendered Potin dumb. Helpless, he had looked on without protest, a prey to all the agony of uncertainty. And now he had in his possession a bullet!

Potin did not believe it sufficient to be innocent. He wished to wash his hands of the whole affair. If flight were possible, he would willingly have emigrated to Timbuctoo for the remainder of his natural life. What! Run to the police with this damnable and damning bullet! Never! His fingers were sufficiently burnt already!

With all the aplomb of which he was capable he walked down the street to the first crossing, and standing there like a man who has nothing to do and is therefore doing

nothing, he dropped the accursed bullet into the mouth of the sewer.

Potin had often swept the refuse of the court into the gutter. Never before had he felt such gratitude to the municipality for providing the gutter with a sewer.





VIII

ONLY M. Janvier could have explained how so important a document as a will should be reposing, forgotten, in the pocket of an old surtout.

When a young man he had studied for the law. But having a passion for the truth, which he would not have suppressed in his own interest, much less in that of a client, and a horror of authorities and precedents, he deserted the faculty of Law for that of Science, finding facts more to his taste than subtleties.

Partly, then, by reason of the competency acquired in his early studies and partly because of his distrust of all lawyers, when making the will which he had mentioned to

Jocaste he wrote it with his own hand, setting down in terms beyond cavil that Corinne was his sole heir, that he commended his soul to God, and praying, if he had enemies or had committed sins, of which he was ignorant, that they both be forgiven. Finally, he gave to each of his household the sum of one thousand francs in testimony of his affection, and to Jocaste, in addition, the further sum of five thousand francs in gratitude for her care of Corinne and for having during twelve years left his desk and papers in tranquillity "in spite of a most perverse conception of what constituted true order" — this provision, however, to be null and void if prior to his decease and against his better judgment, for he considered all trade hazardous, he had already acquired for her the thread-and-needle shop of M. Rodin.

Having thus settled his affairs with God and man, he set out one morning with the will in his surtout pocket to deposit it with other valuables in the vaults of the *Crédit Lyonnais*.

On the way his attention was arrested by a comely young person walking before him who, stopping suddenly, exclaimed in distress: —

“My purse is stolen!”

M. Janvier, appropriating to himself a remark thus addressed to the world at large, at once exhibited a distress even greater.

“Madame, or mademoiselle,” he said, — uncertain as to the proper word, for he was not wearing his spectacles, — and taking off his hat, “I will call the police.”

“But how to get home!” she cried, almost in tears, “I have no money.”

“Allow me,” said M. Janvier, forgetting the police, “I will call a cab and we will go together.”

“But I am causing you inconvenience. My father —”

“None in the world,” said M. Janvier gallantly, forgetting also his document and his errand.

“Are you sure of it?”

“Positively.”

"Passy," said the young person, getting into the victoria which M. Janvier had signalled, "Avenue Henri Martin."

If his companion had been an arrant adventurer, M. Janvier, who now had put on his spectacles, would have walked into the jaws of whatever trap she had set for him, for he perceived her to be quite a harmless young girl of about the age of Corinne. In fact, after giving directions to the coachman, "It is mademoiselle," she said, bestowing on M. Janvier the brightest of smiles.

"So much the better," he replied gayly. "I adore children."

Mademoiselle laughed at this doubtful compliment. For one who had lost a purse she was in surprising spirits. This venerable old man was an angel!

"There was not much in it," she said, "but when one is far from home little is much. I am sure I am giving you trouble — there is a tramway —"

"A tramway!" cried M. Janvier; "I abhor them! It is true, as my friend Pailleron

has remarked of poetry, they are necessary for the people, but on a morning such as this — I think in Passy one hears the birds singing, does one not?"

"Oh, every morning. Sometimes they are too noisy."

"Such noise, mademoiselle, is the joy of the world." Then, after a pause, "You began to speak of your father. Who is this father of yours, pray?"

"He is not exactly my father. I have adopted him."

"What an idea!" exclaimed M. Janvier. "I once adopted a niece, but I never heard of adopting a father."

"But I had none; it was necessary."

M. Janvier could not restrain his merriment.

"Yes, ordinarily a father is necessary — that is to say, in the order of nature —" Here M. Janvier blew his nose violently. "I should like to see the father of your choice, he is a fortunate man." And they laughed together gayly.

"You see," said his companion with that

mingling of artlessness and seductiveness which charmed him, "when *really* a little girl I lived with bad people, with counterfeiters. That is why I adopted this particular father. He belonged formerly to the police."

"Mercy!" exclaimed M. Janvier, "what are you telling me!"

"Alas, yes; it was not gay in those days, but they are finished."

M. Janvier was lost in astonishment.

"You do well to forget them," he gasped.

"I remember the spit. It required one hundred and twenty-seven turns to roast a goose."

"My poor child! And did you adopt a mother also?"

"Also. I climbed the same evening into her lap and remained there. But you have not told me yet to whom I am indebted. We are almost there and my father will wish to know."

"There is no question of debt," said M. Janvier, wiping his spectacles, which had become misty. "My name is Janvier,

which as you see befits my age. If I had had the luck to be adopted by you I should certainly have called you May."

"No, it is Dorante. Stop! Here we are," she cried to the driver.

The victoria drew up before a gate above which the trailing vines were doing their best to hide the word MONREPOS.

"Wait, if you please," said Dorante, springing out, "I will call my father." And pushing the gate before her she disappeared.

"What an adventure!" thought M. Janvier.

A moment later the gate swung open again, revealing a glimpse of a garden, and a man appeared.

"Will you come in, monsieur, and receive my thanks?"

"Really," said M. Janvier, "there is no occasion."

Nevertheless he alighted, treading softly like a man in a dream.

Time had softened the crudity of Monrepos since the day when a fortunate legacy had converted a dream into a reality. The

vines had taken a firmer hold on its encircling walls, clothing their nakedness with rustling leaves. The goldfish, so long exposed to the cruel sun, found shelter beneath the spreading lily-pads, lying motionless in their friendly shade. A soft flush of green moss had invaded the gravel paths, giving them an air of respectable antiquity, and birds were beginning to find nesting-places in the young trees.

M. Janvier was enchanted. "What a spot for cicada!" he thought.

"Dorante has told me of your kindness to her. Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Joly, late inspector of police. My wife will wish to add her gratitude to mine."

"What a Paradise you have here!" cried M. Janvier, gazing about him and taking the proffered chair under the arbor.

"Well, yes, in a way it is a Paradise — thanks to Madame Joly. But after an active life — as you see," pointing to the book on the wicker table, "I endeavor to amuse myself."

M. Janvier reached for the volume and

read the title: "History of the Gauls — Thierry."

"History!" he said, lowering the spectacles on his nose, his eyes twinkling; "why do you not read a romance and have done with it?"

"By reading history I kill two birds with one stone," laughed M. Joly.

"I cannot believe that you once belonged to the police," said M. Janvier, gazing placidly at his host; "you seem to me — fortunately, I have never had to do with persons of your profession —" Then, seeing that he had made a false step, he added quickly, "It is a most honorable one, and in the present stage of civilization most necessary."

"Do you think that at some future time it may be dispensed with?"

"Possibly," replied M. Janvier. "I have frequently induced insects, which in their natural state are enemies, to dwell peaceably together. What would happen, however, if I neglected to feed them, as on one occasion I failed to do, renders me suspicious of the permanency of their good behavior. Insti-

tutions improve more rapidly than human nature, and the appetites are incorrigible."

M. Joly observed his guest attentively. This habit, so valuable to one of his calling, persisted when it ceased to be necessary. "In anger," he said to himself, "this man would be formidable."

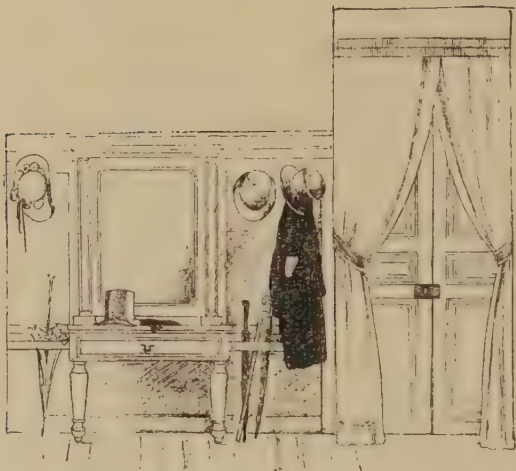
Nothing disposed M. Janvier to any such excess. Even after Mme. Joly and Dorante joined them in the arbor, his natural shyness vanished, so great was his beatitude. Mme. Joly also was extremely shy, and when shyness unites with simplicity and sincerity a charm results which is irresistible. M. Janvier was not in the mood to resist anything. He listened to the story of Dorante's adoption. He inspected the goldfish in the basin, explaining the source of their red pigment. Utterly oblivious of the omelette Rosalie was that moment preparing for him, he accepted Mme. Joly's invitation to breakfast. Not till the coachman, who had begun to suspect that this mild-mannered fare was one of those tricksters who enter by one door and disappear by

another, rang the bell at the gate, did the vision of Jocaste, searching for him between the racks of the bookseller in the Rue du Bon Diable, recall him from Paradise.

"Corinne," he said at three o'clock, while hanging his coat on the peg in the ante-room, "I have had a most amazing adventure, and I have discovered for you a charming companion." And he proceeded to relate what had befallen him.

It was thus that the will, destined for safe-keeping in the vaults of the Crédit Lyonnais, reposed forgotten in the pocket of an old surtout, awaiting the arrival of Pichon.





IX

WHEN, at nine o'clock the next day, Jocaste came with the breakfast tray, Corinne was struck by her altered appearance. She placed the tray by the bedside and sat down silently without a word of reply to the salutation of the Sister Doctor Marbœuf had summoned with Pichon's approval from the neighboring Hôtel Dieu. Her face wore an anxious expression of suppressed excitement, and she watched Sister Gudule moving noiselessly about the room

with ill-concealed annoyance. Under the circumstances cheerfulness was not to be expected, but Jocaste had never before been lacking in sympathy. Corinne put out her hand appealingly, but Jocaste's lay in hers unresponsive. Finally, at the end of her patience, she said irritably to the nurse: —

“Your breakfast is ready.”

As the door closed upon Sister Gudule, Jocaste's hand tightened about Corinne's.

“He is here,” she whispered.

“Who is here, Jocaste?”

“The young man of the roses.”

Corinne comprehended nothing. What had Achille to do with it? Why should he be here? She strained every nerve to understand.

“The magistrate is here — they are going to examine him.”

A vague fear of she knew not what chilled her. She thought instantly of her own imprudence, but in vain endeavored to connect it with what had happened. Yet she trembled. A whole minute passed before she could speak.

"Why?" she said.

"I do not know. Eat something, dear."

Pushing aside the bedclothes, Corinne put her feet to the floor.

"I am going there," she said.

For answer Jocaste began to weep. She raised no objections. It had always been easier to rule M. Janvier than Corinne. Gentle, but less pliant, Corinne dominated her. She began to assist her in her toilet, sobbing to herself. In proportion as her self-control lessened, Corinne grew calmer, more determined.

"Come," she said firmly, "we will go together. Stop crying."

M. Sartain, the magistrate, was sitting at the desk in the library. Some scattered papers were lying upon it. In his hand he held Pichon's report, supplemented by notes added from time to time, notes which betrayed Pichon's indecision. Pichon himself sat opposite him. On the left, pen in hand, a stenographer waited.

M. Sartain was one of those men who believe in that theory of criminal jurispru-

dence which accuses boldly, which assumes guilt and imposes upon the accused the burden of proving innocence. He conducted an examination as a general who adopts an aggressive offensive conducts a campaign, searching out ruthlessly the weak points in the defence of his adversary, breaking down in the hope of breaking through, sacrificing at times his own convictions for the bare chance of discovering something.

Pichon held him in great respect. A man who hesitated at nothing, who threw his reserves recklessly into action, who dared to fly in the face of facts, inspired the cautious Pichon with admiration.

On the other hand, M. Sartain's round face and engaging smile quite belied his profession. Pichon listened with positive delight to the reassuring voice which extracted admissions from those of less nimble wit, anticipating the moment when the smile should become a frown and the persuasion denunciation.

"Pichon," M. Sartain was saying, "I have studied your report and I have come to cer-

tain conclusions. This murder — for as to suicide the evidence of Doctor Marbœuf is conclusive — was committed either by an inmate of the apartment or by some person from without. Yesterday morning in this room were thirty thousand francs. They have disappeared. You are confident that they are not in the apartment. Who, yesterday, knew they were here? The messenger, certainly — perhaps also others. Doctor Marbœuf asserts that when he arrived this drawer was open. The only fingerprints found upon it are those of Monsieur Janvier. It is then reasonable to assume that Monsieur Janvier, on receiving the bank-notes, placed them in this open drawer, from which they were taken by some one who either accidentally or from previous knowledge saw them there. As between the messenger and the servants, since the latter are under surveillance, we will begin with the former. Have you sent for him?"

"He is here," replied Pichon, rising.

Looking into the face of the young man

who came in, M. Sartain saw precisely what Corinne had seen — an open brow and clear eyes, albeit the cheeks were paler than when Achille was purchasing roses.

It was at this instant that the door of the salon opened and Corinne appeared. She was alone, Jocaste having failed her at the threshold. She did not appear to notice this, and at the sight of Achille a low cry escaped her.

It was clear to M. Sartain that these two knew each other, for Achille's calmness had also deserted him, and their eyes were speaking a language which interested him profoundly, inasmuch as he did not understand it. How did it happen that a messenger from the bank and this young girl —

His train of thought was cut short by the voice of Corinne: —

“Monsieur,” she said, “I wish to be present.”

In M. Sartain's opinion wishes had no place in criminal investigations. It was his invariable practice to interrogate witnesses separately. It occurred to him that in this

instance more might be learned from the embarrassment of these young people. Nevertheless, he said: —

“I warn you, mademoiselle, that it may be painful for you.”

“Since we have the same object in view and that object is supreme, the pain does not matter,” she replied.

M. Sartain gazed at her admiringly. Candor might be expected of her age and sex, but not such courage. Her eyes fixed steadily upon him, she sat beyond Pichon, her hands clasped in her lap.

M. Sartain turned to Achille.

“Your name —”

“Achille —”

M. Sartain raised his hand for silence.

“— is Achille Moran, and you are nineteen the 20th of this month. You live with your mother, a widow, at No. 27 Rue Pavenne, and you are employed as a messenger in the Crédit Lyonnais at a salary of twelve hundred francs. Yesterday at eleven o'clock you left the office of the Crédit Lyonnais in the Boulevard des Italiens with a portfolio

containing thirty thousand francs for Monsieur Janvier. You arrived here between twenty minutes past eleven and twenty minutes before twelve, a time when the concierge was absent, and you were admitted by one Gervais, the butler. You delivered the thirty notes of one thousand francs each to Monsieur Janvier here in this room, obtaining this receipt" — M. Sartin held up a paper between his thumb and forefinger. "How does it happen that neither the concierge nor the butler saw you depart?"

The open brow remained unclouded, and the frank voice replied: —

"Because, if the concierge was absent between twenty minutes past eleven and twenty minutes before twelve, he could not see me leaving at half-past eleven, and because, Monsieur Janvier, having signed the receipt and dismissed me, I went out at that hour unattended."

"The spring lock being open."

"Pardon me, it was in place and I left it as I found it."

"You are fortunate in possessing so accurate a memory," said M. Sartain dryly. "In serious matters exactness is indispensable."

"I am exact," replied Achille, "because on reaching the street I looked at my watch and saw that it was the hour for the luncheon provided for the junior clerks at the office."

"But you were not present at that luncheon. It was one o'clock before you returned Monsieur Janvier's receipt to the cashier. Tell us a little about that interval of an hour and a half, if you please."

Achille's eyes fell to the floor and the pale face flushed against his will. It required all the strength of that will not to look at Corinne. For under the portal of No. 13, disappointed at not having seen her, and in the hope of yet doing so, he had loitered in the café opposite, squandering a franc and a half of the salary he usually gave to his mother. And fortune had smiled upon him; for after pretending to read all the journals on the café tables he had been rewarded by the sight of Corinne and Jocaste departing for the flowers, and had exchanged with the

one behind the back of the other a glance which compensated for his disappointment. Could he say so? No, it was impossible.

"I do not remember," he said.

Corinne had risen. Unlike Achille's, her face was pale with resolution. Of all this talk of francs and receipt she understood nothing. But she did understand that Achille was in some sort of peril.

"He says what is true," she cried. "I saw him before the café opposite when I went out with Jocaste for my flowers."

"Ah!" said M. Sartain, "did he say that? I had not observed it." And turning to Pichon, "Call Jocaste, Pichon."

Jocaste entered. She looked from one to the other of those present, her lips compressed, her hands twitching.

"Jocaste," said M. Sartain pleasantly, "I wish to ask a simple question. Yesterday, after breakfast, you went with mademoiselle to the flower market. Did you perchance at that time observe this gentleman," — indicating Achille, — "in front of the café opposite?"

Jocaste, who had eyes in the back of her head, saw far more than was imagined by those who had eyes only for each other. Taken aback by this unexpected question, she did not know what she ought to say. But she scented danger, ill-defined, yet imminent. What did Corinne wish her to say? What was the magistrate aiming at?

"No," she said falteringly.

"Jocaste!" cried Corinne imploringly, "think! Jocaste, when we passed the café."

"It seems to me, now that you remind me," she stammered, — "yes, it is true, I saw him."

Corinne sank back in her chair.

"Were others present on the sidewalk before the café?" asked M. Sartain encouragingly.

"Yes, I think so."

"How is it that among all these people your memory singles out this young man — do you know him?"

Once more Jocaste was in an agony of indecision. She wished to look at Corinne, but did not dare to.



ACHILLES

"No."

"Pardon me," interrupted Achille, "was it not for you I made change one day at the flower market?"

Jocaste saw that for the second time she had blundered.

"Yes, yes, that must be the reason," she said eagerly.

"And you also, mademoiselle, know this young man, since you recognized him," said M. Sartain to Corinne.

"I was with Jocaste when he made change for us."

Pichon could not repress a sigh. Was it, then, true that under every fair exterior there was a skeleton? He felt also a twinge of pity. Unconsciously Corinne was establishing M. Sartain's contention that Achille was in the neighborhood after the hour of breakfast.

"I see," said M. Sartain. "One good turn deserves another. Monsieur supplies you with the needed change, and you supply him, as you think, with the needed alibi."

Corinne's eyes flashed. She did not know what an alibi was, but she knew that she was insulted.

"I supply the truth, monsieur," she said with dignity.

"We are asking for *all* the truth, mademoiselle. How long is it since this exchange of civilities at the flower market?"

"A week — perhaps more."

"And you pretend that you recognized Monsieur Moran solely because of this meeting?"

"I pretend nothing and I withhold nothing. What you have just told monsieur, his name and age, that he lives with his mother and is employed in the Crédit Lyonnais, I know already. He himself told me all this when we met once by chance in the Place des Vosges."

She said this defiantly, even boastfully. Jocaste was dumbfounded. All her ideas of propriety were suffering.

"So," pursued M. Sartain relentlessly; "and was your uncle aware of these meetings?"

"I said once, by chance," replied Corinne, the tears close to her eyes.

M. Sartain turned again to Achille.

"You persist, then, in affirming that you left Monsieur Janvier's apartment at half-past eleven. Suppose that instead of half-past eleven I should say it was half-past twelve."

To Achille the purport of these questions was becoming clear. He was not a mere witness, he was being accused. Of what, he did not know, but conscious of innocence, he had hitherto controlled himself. The covert attack upon Corinne rendered him furious. Stifling his indignation, he endeavored to smile.

"You would be in error a whole hour. Furthermore, since between twenty minutes past eleven and twenty minutes before twelve you say the concierge was absent, if, as you assert, I left at half-past twelve, after his return, then certainly he would have seen me. Confront me with him! Does he dare — Ah! of what am I accused?" he cried, losing control of himself.

“Since you cannot remember,” replied M. Sartain ironically, leaning forward on the table, “I will tell you. At twenty minutes past eleven, after Gervais admitted you, you counted out in this room on this table to Monsieur Janvier sitting in this chair the notes in your portfolio, and took this receipt from his hand. With this receipt in your possession you thought your honor safe. But instead of doing what you pretend, what no one saw you do, you secreted yourself behind that portière in the hope that Monsieur Janvier would leave you alone in this room with the bank-notes which you had seen him place in this drawer. Unfortunately for him, and for you also, your hope was justified. Monsieur Janvier left the room to obtain this book” — M. Sartain held up the treatise of M. Fabre — “from the bookseller across the way, and in his absence you transferred the contents of the drawer to your portfolio. This operation would have been speedily effected had you not stopped to admire this necklace, which after reflection you decided

also to appropriate. Startled by the unlooked-for return of Monsieur Janvier —”

During this recital a cynical smile had spread over Achille’s lips. At first fascinated, he passed in turn from amusement to revolt. What he heard was so absurd, so grotesque, that far from being terrified, he felt only contempt, and, turning to Corinne, uttered a short, disdainful laugh.

Irritated by this laugh, M. Sartain went on implacably: —

“— Startled by the sudden return of Monsieur Janvier, you regained your hiding-place. Your position was a difficult one. There was nothing to be done but to wait patiently in the hope that when breakfast was served, you might escape through the anteroom. To your dismay, during breakfast the door of the dining-room remained open. From your retreat you saw that it was impossible to pass without discovery. With a beating heart you waited. At last breakfast is over, mademoiselle goes out with Jocaste to the flower market, and Monsieur Janvier, closing the door upon

Gervais in the dining-room, returns to his desk. The way is clear. But in your agitation you let fall the necklace. Monsieur Janvier —”

Corinne could bear it no longer.

“It is a lie!” she cried. In her distress, choked by horror and indignation, her voice ended in a sob.

“Pichon,” said M. Sartain, “introduce the waiter of the Café de l’Abondance.”

“At what hour,” he asked, “did you serve this young gentleman?”

“The exact hour I cannot answer for. As I said yesterday it must have been about half after noon, since at noon I come on duty and already some time had passed.”

“But,” interrupted Achille, “I had been there since half-past eleven, before ordering anything.”

“As to that I cannot say,” replied the waiter, shrugging his shoulders.

Dismissing him, M. Sartain fixed his eyes upon Achille.

“So now you are beginning to remember. You left Monsieur Janvier’s apartment,

then, at half-past eleven. Instead of availing yourself of the luncheon provided by your employers you loiter a whole hour in a café with an important document in your pocket. Is that credible?"

"Would I loiter there with thirty thousand francs in my pocket?" exclaimed Achille sarcastically.

"Read what you have taken down," said M. Sartain to his assistant.

While listening to the dry voice of the stenographer, Pichon was in agony. His chief had blundered. Had he forgotten that if the necklace was dropped before the murder was committed, the stain could not be explained? For Doctor Marbœuf had identified the substance on both the pearl and the blotter as matter from the brain. No, M. Sartain had only been playing like a cat with a mouse — and the mouse was escaping! Pichon was jealous of the majesty of the law, and he suffered.

"You adhere, then, to what you have said?" asked M. Sartain when the stenographer had finished.

Achille had recovered his composure.

"Monsieur," he replied, "you accuse me of a crime of which I am innocent and of which I know nothing. I adhere to what I have said because it is the truth, and if justice still exists, if God —"

"Come, come," said Meneval, who at a sign from the magistrate pushed him through the door, "you are not the King of Prussia!"

Corinne had listened to every word. She understood, without comprehending. What were they saying? Was she dreaming? She felt a numbness, as though in a nightmare some one was binding her with cords. At every struggle to free herself the cords tightened. Her suffering face turned to Achille, she gazed at him imploringly. Why did he not crush with the fury which consumed her these monstrous falsehoods? She made an effort to stand, swaying to and fro, clutching at Jocaste. M. Sartain ran quickly forward.

"Open the window," he shouted to Pichon. "Some water!"

At his approach the swaying figure stiffened.

"Do not touch me!" she whispered hoarsely.

At the door of the salon she turned, leaning upon Jocaste, and tried to speak. "It is a lie — a lie!" she gasped.

Overtaken by Pichon, who, after a hurried consultation with the magistrate, had followed him into the anteroom, Achille, stunned by the ferocity of the attack upon him, had shaken himself free from Meneval. He wished to return, to hurl his wrath in the teeth of his accuser, to speak to Corinne.

"You dare to accuse me —" Breathless, he could get no farther.

"Young man," said Pichon majestically, "if you are accused, it is in order that you may justify yourself. Circumstances point a finger at you and you explain them. Of what, then, do you complain?"

Pichon threw open the door, smiling.

"You mean that I am free?"

"Freedom is a term much abused," observed Pichon. "One says, for example, 'as

free as air,' which, nevertheless, obeys the attraction of the earth. Would you have me break the laws of the universe!"

"You have broken —"

"Tut! tut!" said Pichon impatiently, closing the door upon him and speaking in a low voice to Meneval; "It is the turn of Potin — go, bring him."





X

THE instant Jocaste saw Pichon hold up the necklace she knew it was for Corinne. For Jocaste possessed an imagination, and being of a practical turn of mind, she employed it in the discovery of what is instead of what is not. It did not matter that she had heard M. Janvier declare that jewels were baubles for savages. It did not matter that this man who bought pearls for

thirty thousand francs slept on an iron cot whose only companions were a washstand from which the enamel was peeling in places, a cheap clothes-press adorned with stencilled flowers, a mirror whose frame was of imitation mahogany, hanging beside a window which, until Corinne added two white dimity curtains looped with blue ribbons, boasted only of a linen shade. It must be said in passing that while M. Janvier could not deny Corinne's contention that these curtains gave a 'gay note' to his room, they sadly interfered with the light required for shaving, and the loops of gay ribbon were continually becoming entangled in the stick of the shade whenever he wished to raise or lower it.

No, none of these things mattered — not even M. Janvier's two cuff-buttons of horn or miserable American watch worth scarce two hundred sous. It was Corinne's birthday and the pearls were for Corinne.

To Corinne, on the other hand, the necklace meant nothing. It was not even a mystery. It was as if it did not exist. Corinne

also possessed an imagination, which, unlike Jocaste's, was devoted to what is not instead of what is. It had already invested a poor clerk on a salary of twelve hundred francs with qualities never before concentrated in one individual of the species, besides attributing to him several which did not exist at all.

Scarcely had the door of the library closed behind her after Achille's interrogation when, to Jocaste's amazement, this wisp of a girl for whom Doctor Marbœuf had requisitioned a nurse and prescribed sleeping powders, said with sudden energy: —

“Jocaste, get my hat. We are going to Passy.”

Jocaste herself was not deficient in energy of a muscular variety, as the polished floor of M. Janvier's chamber, on whose surface danced the light of his candle, attested. But she was downcast and sick at heart. She had blundered in her answers. She was distraught with fears.

“To Passy!” she echoed incredulously.

“Quick! there is not a moment to lose.”

Passing out by the service door, they were intercepted by the ubiquitous Pichon.

"You are going out," he said. "Certainly, there is no objection whatever. But I regret greatly to deprive mademoiselle of the society of her maid. Unhappily Monsieur Sartain desires to ask her a few questions."

"Then I will go alone," said Corinne.

A number of people were gathered on the sidewalk, gazing with that morbid curiosity which a house visited by misfortune excites in even the least concerned.

"Get a cab for mademoiselle," whispered Pichon to Meneval.

Before Corinne the crowd parted silently. Accompanied by Meneval she walked quickly down the street. She wore no veil, and a murmur of admiration and sympathy followed her. At the first crossing she turned, looking Meneval in the face.

"I said I would go alone."

"As you please," replied Meneval.

"Tell your master, furthermore, that I

am going to Passy, Avenue Henri Martin, No. 60."

"That saves trouble," muttered Meneval.

He stood still, watching the slender figure till it disappeared; then, turning down the side street, got into a cab waiting at the curb. Meneval was an old bird not to be caught with chaff. Lowering the front window, he whispered a few words to the driver. "All the same," he said to himself, "it is better to be on the safe side."

Meneval did not really believe he was being misled. If he followed Corinne it was only because, having been deceived so often, distrust had become second nature. Confident that Pichon would ask who it was with whom she was taking refuge, when the gate of No. 60 closed behind her, he got out, in order to interrogate the brass plate on the gate post. As the single word "Monrepos" threw no light on the occupant of the villa, he went on to the nearest shop, where he learned that the owner of Monrepos was one Mme. Joly.

"Joly!" he said to himself. Could it be that old fox, formerly inspector, into whose shoes Pichon had stepped when a legacy, that destroyer of usefulness, falling into his wife's lap, had led to his retirement?

Repassing the gate of Monrepos his doubt was set at rest by M. Joly himself, who was about to enter the cab vacated by Corinne.

"Hallou!" said M. Joly, hailing him. "Is it you, Meneval! How fortunate! On what errand are you driving about Passy like a prince in his chariot?"

"Excuse me," said Meneval, "I am in a hurry."

"So am I," replied M. Joly, dismissing his cab and getting into Meneval's. "I will go with you."

"But I am on duty," protested Meneval.

"Am I detaining you? I said I would go with you. You are going to No. 13, Rue du Bon Diable, are you not? I also."

"You are going to the Rue du Bon Diable!"

"As a friend of the deceased only. As

you are aware, I am now a gentleman of leisure."

Meneval stirred uneasily in his seat. Formerly under M. Joly's orders, the old habit of obedience was asserting itself.

"Then you know —"

"Just now, from the young lady on whose account you are taking the air in Passy. You are wasting your time, Meneval. She says she gave you the address distinctly.

"One can never be too sure," grumbled Meneval.

"Tell us about it. My young friend was so agitated — Living quietly here in the suburbs one knows nothing of what is going on."

From his tunic Meneval drew a morning journal.

"Here is what they say. Pichon is in charge. He will tell you."

"So Pichon is in charge! It will be a pleasure to see Pichon again." And unfolding the newspaper, M. Joly was immediately lost to conversation.

Confronted with head lines, his scepti-

cism usually corresponded to the size of the type. In this instance the lucubrations of the reporter's brain amazed him. Since their first meeting M. Janvier had been a frequent visitor at Monrepos, and Corinne and Dorante had become inseparable. How astonished Mme. Joly would be to learn that this old gentleman, ostensibly occupied with cicada, was a degenerate scattering pearls behind the footlights!

"Who is the examining magistrate, Meneval?" he asked, returning the newspaper.

"Monsieur Sartain."

"An intelligent man; a little brusque at times. When he looses his harpoon it sinks deep in the blubber."

"Will you go in?" asked Meneval, as the cab stopped before the archway of No. 13.

"No, disturb no one. When Pichon has a spare moment, be so good as to say a friend of Monsieur Janvier is here. I will wait."

Entering the lodge of Potin, he saw a man reading a newspaper.



XI

WHEN Gervais awoke the morning after the crime he lay a long time staring at the ceiling above him. Sleep had been the complete obliteration of memory, the insistent effort of nature to retrieve herself. Disconnected pictures floated before him, as to one emerging from the heavy slumber of a narcotic. For an indefinite period he persuaded himself that he was dreaming, realizing only gradually that the

nightmare oppressing him was the reality instead of the dream. At times he laughed hysterically. What he had done was so absurd, so illogical, as to be intolerable. Yet he no longer regarded it with horror, but rather with wonder that having committed one folly he had committed others, heaping one upon another. Why had he killed? To rob? No. And having killed, why had he destroyed the fruit of his crime? Nothing had been done logically; everything had been an impulse, a blunder.

All this time he saw the terror-stricken face of Jocaste. It was she he had murdered, poisoning her soul with suspicion. The life he had removed had not stood in the way of their happiness. In destroying one he had destroyed the other.

“Ah, well,” he mourned, “what is the use — what is done is done.” And he began to dress.

There was a way out. He saw it before him, but he knew he had not the courage. Besides, Pichon had taken his revolver. There was another way — to go to Pichon

and say, "It was I who, in a moment of —" Of what? Would any one believe that without a motive a sane man would do such a thing? They would ask for the thirty thousand francs and laugh at him!

At a sound in the courtyard he went to the window. Potin, sweeping the court, was picking up something which he held in his hand. Gervais watched him. He went out. Presently he returned.

"What is it, Potin?" he asked.

"What is what?" replied Potin sullenly.

"Nothing."

A clock near by struck the hour, the hour at which he was accustomed to take the coffee to his master. He finished dressing, looked in the glass, and went to the pantry.

To his relief Jocaste was not to be seen, yet he wanted her. In the kitchen Rosalie was humming an air of her native province. She was not disposed to gayety. Pichon's search among her most sacred belongings had exasperated her afresh. Among them were various treasured offerings of Potin's adoration not intended for profane eyes or

hands. This song of her childhood came back to her unsolicited, and like a window opened to her a vision of thatched roofs and pleasant fields shaded by poplars. "Sacré ville!" she muttered to herself.

Far from dreading as yesterday to enter the library, Gervais wished to. Was *it* still there? What were they doing behind that door? Closed, it acted like a magnet. An insatiable curiosity devoured him. He expected to be summoned, to be the centre of interest, and they left him alone!

Assuming an offhand manner, he opened the door into the vestibule.

Dupin was there.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To take the air."

"Take it in the court," said Dupin; "it is more salubrious than in the street."

"Are you joking?"

"I have my orders."

"Oh, very well," replied Gervais, shrugging his shoulders. "Is it permissible to say good-morning to Potin?" he asked sarcastically.

Receiving no answer, he crossed to the lodge of the concierge. To his salutation Potin, sullen, paid no heed. Gervais flung himself on a chair. Nothing was left of the refreshment of sleep. A mental fatigue, a moral weariness, which sapped his physical strength, had taken its place. Uncertainty, ignorance, tormented him.

A morning journal lay on the table. At the head of the page in large characters ran the caption, "Mysterious murder in the Rue du Bon Diable"; and below followed one of those masterpieces of fiction which the reporter puts together from scanty facts and hints picked up here and there, garnished with inventions of the imagination and gossip for the public appetite. M. Janvier especially suffered in this recital. This savant, living in retirement with a young and charming niece, was a veritable monster. It was said that he squandered a fortune on a well-known actress whose name was withheld for the present in the interest of justice.

Gervais laughed derisively.

"Are they mad, these people!" he shouted.

Potin invariably read the morning paper at night. His duties over, he began at the first column on the first page and, omitting only the *feuilleton* which he reserved for the last, plodded religiously through leading article, news, and advertisements, with absolute impartiality and equal interest. Not so to-day. Accustomed to accept whatever was written, the account of the tragedy furnished by the press had completely befuddled him. Distorted, the little world in which he had lived so long in peace was unrecognizable.

"Who knows!" he muttered.

"What!" cried Gervais in disgust, "you too believe such trumpery?"

"To the devil with it all!" shouted Potin in turn. "Is this a respectable house? Tell me that! Am I an honest man? To every man his deserts, I say."

A constrained smile played about Gervais's mouth. He stared at the page before him without seeing it, a far look in his eyes.



HE BEGAN AT THE FIRST COLUMN ON THE FIRST PAGE

"Yes," he repeated slowly, "to every man his deserts."

An immense weariness oppressed him, a longing for relief, for comradeship, for escape from the loneliness into which his crime had plunged him. Suddenly he raised his head.

"What were you looking at in the court, Potin?"

The question slipped from him unawares. Yet for a long time he had known he would ask it. Like the novice on his wheel; attracted by the obstacle he would avoid, he could not resist it.

Potin started. His sole thought was to keep clear of the whole business, his one dread to be entangled in the dragnet of the police. That he should have had the ill luck to run upon that bullet, that after its burial in the sewer it should have a resurrection to plague him, infuriated him. Moreover, he had not escaped the pencil of the reporter. He was said to have been practising with a revolver in the moat of the enceinte.

"A diamond!" he retorted angrily; "they grow there overnight."

"What a joker you are, Potin!"

"Well, then, a mouse-trap, if you like that better."

Gervais sought Potin's eyes, but they avoided him. At all hazards he had to know what had become of the bullet.

"Yesterday, after breakfast, I went to my room. When I returned, the revolver on the shelf of the pantry was missing, and — are you listening, Potin? — and *other things* had happened. They are asking for what purpose you were practising with my revolver. You are in a fix, Potin."

"Comrade," said Potin, aghast, "it is you who are joking."

"Comrade!" repeated Gervais jeeringly. "Does a comrade return the pistol to my drawer and throw the bullet from my room? Are you thinking to say you found it under my window?"

A look of poignant fear and agony distorted Potin's face. The realization that Gervais was in earnest was sinking slowly into his consciousness.

"Enough!" cried Gervais menacingly; "what have you done with it?"

"It is in the sewer," whispered Potin, beside himself.

"The sewer! What is in the sewer?"

"The mouse-trap."

Gervais drew a long sigh of relief.

"Forgive me, Potin; for a moment — I thought — I fancied —"

"Good God!" gasped Potin.

"But now I see clearly. I unlatched the door on account of Jocaste who went out with mademoiselle — that accounts for it — probably *he* — do you understand? — saw the revolver on the shelf, and afterwards, *afterwards*, seeing it on the table —"

"Seeing what on the table?" His eyes distended, Potin was drinking in every word.

"The bullet —"

"He saw it on the table?"

"It is only a supposition I am making," said Gervais evasively. "I did not say so — I was only supposing — in that case he would carry it off, and at the first opportunity, when passing out — he would throw it — remember, it is only a supposition I am making —"

"Potin!" called Dupin from across the passageway, "they are wanting you in there."

Potin's brain was in a whirl. While following Dupin he reeled like a drunken man. Ideas he could not express, formidable ideas of revolt and hostility, agitated him. By some strange fatality the Law was laying its heavy hand upon him. Often, when passing before the law courts, he had shuddered to see persons going tranquilly in and out of those portals to the cell and to the guillotine. In the presence of M. Sartain he stood stock-still, watchful, confused thoughts stirring in the depths of his simple intelligence.

Unfamiliar with the circumlocutions of the law, the kindly manner and gentle voice of the magistrate surprised him. They began, too, to ask him absurd questions of things in which he took no interest, his age, birthplace, and parentage. How could he remember what took place in infancy! Led skilfully along, allowed to have his own way, gradually he gained confidence, grew voluble, gesticulating and interrupting with

irrelevant details. He wished to tell of an aunt whom he had not seen for twenty years and who had two projecting teeth like a marmoset. In the midst of these digressions M. Sartain enquired at what time he returned from the creamery. Checked in his reminiscences, a sudden caution, like a chill, seized him. He knew nothing. He had gone and come. How should he know what occurred in his absence? That stood to reason. No, he saw no one. At no time had he seen a messenger. He had his own affairs to attend to. At noon he wound the clock, and he began to tell of a new one, running eight days, which M. Janvier had promised him. Yes, naturally, he had left the cream in the pantry —

“Do you recognize this revolver?” interrupted M. Sartain.

He protested. All pistols were the same to him, like cats in the dark.

“Nevertheless, you recognize it, since recently you borrowed it. What were you doing in the library yesterday morning after seeing M. Janvier go out? Listen, before

you answer. Last Sunday you borrowed Gervais's revolver. You cleaned it yesterday morning, and on returning from the creamery you determined to give it back — an opportune moment! You left it on the shelf of the pantry, and not finding Gervais there you made this an excuse for penetrating into the library. There you saw Gervais. Am I well informed?"

Potin was dumb with astonishment. How did they know all these things? The true and the false were so inextricably mingled that he could not distinguish between them. Was it possible that, like Gervais, they were accusing him?

M. Sartain continued: —

"The thought that Monsieur Janvier might return disturbed you, but what did you see in the drawer of Monsieur Janvier's table that led you to go back after he had breakfasted?"

Potin knew very well that he had not entered the apartment a second time. But his confusion, like a fever in which one becomes delirious, blurred everything. The

assertions he heard were so positive! He struggled with them as with a bad dream.

"Was it you or Gervais who cleaned the revolver the second time? What did you do with the bullet, Potin?"

Sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, Potin made a desperate effort. A gleam of intelligence flashed through his distracted brain.

"Would any one who carried off the bullet leave behind him the pistol?" he shouted at the top of his voice; "I think not!"

"You are a clever fellow, Potin. How do you know the bullet was carried off? Tell us freely all you think."

"I think — I think —" began Potin, endeavoring to remember what Gervais had told him, — "that seeing it there on the table —"

"Wait, Potin. We know very well that the person of whom you are speaking carried away the bullet; but *you*, Potin, how did you know he saw it on the table? Have you the gift of second sight?"

"That is only a supposition I make," said

Potin magnanimously. "I take no credit for it."

M. Sartain smiled.

"I repeat, you are a clever fellow. Seeing it on the table, what did you do with it?"

"Why do you say that?" roared Potin, now completely out of his head; "it was in the court!"

"Ah! You threw it first into the court, and then — Come, come, Potin, we know what you did with it."

Bewildered, hopeless, Potin looked from one to the other. Pichon also was smiling, moving his head up and down as if to say: "Oh, yes, we know, — out with it."

"You know — how can that be —" Potin's lips went on moving without making a sound.

"What are you saying, Potin? Speak louder!"

Potin made an effort.

"I say how can that be? No one was about."

Pichon leaped to his feet. In the long run everything went into the sewer.

"You threw it into the sewer, Potin!"

His mouth wide open, Potin nodded slowly.

During Potin's absence Gervais had endeavored to finish the account given in the newspaper, but he could not fix his mind on what he read. He perceived clearly enough that like hounds seeking a trail they were beating about in the bush. Their vacillations angered him. He alone *knew*. What were they asking Potin? What would Potin say? If they really suspected Potin, that proved they had no facts. Potin was such a simple fellow! They would certainly extort from him the truth about the bullet, and they would argue that having thrown it into the sewer — how stupid to suspect Potin! For Potin was innocent. They might worry him for a time, but in the end, in the end —

Just then a man came in. He took no notice of Gervais. Sitting down, he crossed his hands over his waistcoat and closed his eyes as if about to take a nap.

His nerves on edge, irritated by everything, Gervais coughed, to attract his attention. Who was he, and what was he doing

here? In repose his face wore a benevolent expression which Gervais hated. Every one was an enemy. In the whole world he had henceforth no friend.

“Comrade!”

It was the voice of Potin, who with Dupin was passing out into the street.

“Comrade!”

Dupin’s arm linked in one of his, he was gesticulating despairingly with the other.

“Ah!” said M. Joly, opening his eyes, and smiling benignly on Gervais, “they are making progress in there.”

Gervais remained standing, his eyes following the retreating Potin. It was true, then, they were arresting him! He passed his hand over his forehead in the effort to understand. How ridiculous to arrest Potin! With difficulty he restrained himself from laughing in the face of this idiot who said ‘progress.’ A sickly smile of weariness spread over his face. He was tired, mortally tired of it all.

He threw down the paper with a gesture of disgust and went into the house.



XII

IMMEDIATELY on receiving Meneval's report of the result of his journey to Passy, Pichon hurried to the lodge of Potin. Once before, in a difficult case which had baffled him, the Prefect had called his former chief to his assistance. Was he to be humiliated a second time? It is true that on that occasion M. Joly had effaced himself as far as possible, and in a measure Pichon's regard for M. Joly was compounded of affection as well as respect. They had shared

danger together. It was easier in those days, when M. Joly stood above him in the hierarchy of rank, to respect a superiority of another kind. Pichon felt the artificiality of the elevation to which a legacy had raised him.

M. Joly was prepared for the offended vanity depicted on Pichon's countenance.

"Pichon," he said, before the latter could speak, "I see you are surprised, but your surprise does not equal mine. Why do you permit a suspect to take refuge in my house?"

"A suspect!" exclaimed Pichon, completely off his guard. "Do you mean *mademoiselle*? No one suspects her of anything!"

"Ah, well, if that is the case," said M. Joly, putting on his hat, "I might as well be off. You lift a weight from my heart. You see, this child is the companion of *Dorante*. We adore her."

"Wait a moment," said Pichon, following M. Joly into the passageway; "I had no idea you were acquainted with *Monsieur Janvier*."

"We were friends, Pichon."

"Really!" Pichon had acquitted the Prefect. "How you surprise me! Come back a moment. One cannot speak out here with people about. As a friend of the family, Monsieur Sartain will certainly wish to consult you."

"I fear I can be of no service to him," replied M. Joly, allowing himself to be led back into Potin's lodge, "but as a favor to you, Pichon, for the sake of our old friendship — if it is your wish. What a dreadful catastrophe!" he sighed, sinking into a chair; "a man who had not an enemy in the world, so gentle, so inoffensive!"

"But he had thirty thousand francs," interrupted Pichon; "that suffices."

"What! there was also a robbery?"

"Come in, I will show you."

"Wait a little, my friend. In former times, when we worked together, you taught me an excellent lesson — respect for authority. That authority is now yours. Naturally, being, as you say, a friend of the family, if I could be of use to *you*, Pichon,

as a consulting attorney, so to speak, without fee, I would not say no. But there is Monsieur Sartain."

"I answer for him," replied Pichon, wholly mollified. "Just now he is at breakfast —"

"Let him finish his breakfast by all means. Even animals must not be disturbed while eating. Meanwhile, since you ask me" — his arm resting affectionately on Pichon's shoulder — "shall we have a look about as we used to do?"

"Come in," said Pichon; "I will show you my report."

"By the way, this fellow who was in the lodge of the concierge while I was waiting for you —"

"Gervais? He is the butler."

"You think it prudent to permit people to wander about in that manner?"

Pichon laughed, winking knowingly.

"Never fear. Dupin has an eye on him — a trick I learned from you."

"From me, Pichon! What trick?"

"When one thinks to enjoy liberty,"

said Pichon sententiously, "one commits mistakes."

"To be sure, to be sure, I remember, — an excellent method."

On their way to the library Pichon was explaining what he found on his arrival.

"But first read my report," he said. "Give Monsieur Joly your notes," he said to the stenographer.

"You take the responsibility?" demurred M. Joly, taking out his spectacles.

"Assuredly."

Pichon watched his face as he read.

From time to time M. Joly nodded approvingly, and Pichon smiled. He was proud of his logic.

"Take your time," he said; "I am going to tell Monsieur Sartain."

Left to himself, after finishing the notes of the stenographer, M. Joly took up a book lying on the table — the treatise of M. Fabre.

"What a curious fancy!" he said, turning over the leaves. "Yet they say this Monsieur Fabre is known on two continents."

"It is the first time I ever heard of him," said the stenographer.

"Very likely. There is a proverb on that subject — *à propos* of prophets in their own country," he added, seeing the blank look on the face.

From the open book a card had fallen into his lap.

*To Corinne on her eighteenth birthday,
from her uncle and humble servant.*

M. Joly tucked it into his waistcoat pocket, but on second thought, thinking it more appropriate to leave it where it belonged, he raised the cover of the jewel-case beside Gervais's revolver and laid it on the necklace.

The drawer on the right of the table was open. M. Joly glanced into it casually.

Seeing his curiosity, the stenographer deemed it incumbent upon him to observe that all the drawers of the table had been examined.

"I suppose so," said M. Joly, lifting a notebook from among the loose papers. "The accounts of the household," he re-

marked, turning over the pages. "Here are strawberries at six francs the basket — in May — what extravagance!"

"What do you expect in a house where they buy pearls?" sneered the stenographer.

"True," assented M. Joly, putting Gervais's account-book into his pocket; "we live in a strange world. I suspect the strawberries were intended for the same person as the necklace."

"For what person?"

"Ah! That is the question."

The stenographer gave M. Joly a quizzical look. "I think so too," he said after a moment's reflection.

When Pichon returned, M. Joly was examining Gervais's revolver. Unlocking the barrel and sighting through it, he showed it to Pichon. "It shines like a new napoleon."

Pichon beckoned him aside.

"What is it, Pichon? You have something on your mind."

Pichon lowered his voice.

"I have something on my conscience.

Two things in this affair trouble me — that pistol you have in your hand, and the bank-notes. Suppose we put it this way: the door from the street is open, mademoiselle and Jocaste are out, Gervais is in his room waiting the return of Jocaste before clearing the table, Rosalie is in the kitchen. Could anything be easier? You come and go. You drop the necklace in your haste, you throw away the bullet in passing out, you carry off *the* pistol, for this one, cleaned by Potin, is in the drawer of Gervais's bureau; you also carry away the bank-notes, for they are gone. No one of the inmates has left the house, yet I cannot find them."

"On the score of thoroughness, Pichon, you have no equal. I know that well. But why does your conscience trouble you?"

Pichon lifted his eyes from the floor to M. Joly's.

"There is one room I have not searched."

"That does you credit."

"It is only a formality, but Monsieur Sartain — if he knew I had neglected it —"

"Oh, well, if you have also Monsieur Sar-

tain on your conscience, that is different. As for Corinne, I know what she would say. She would beg you to."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Come, then," said Pichon.

At Corinne's door, his hand on the knob, he paused. "It is only a formality," he said, looking at M. Joly.

M. Joly nodded. Pichon opened the door.

Beyond the rose curtains of the bed was a dressing-table. Before the mirror, on one side was an icon in a silver frame, on the other a picture of M. Janvier.

"It is only a formality," repeated Pichon.

"For my part I think it is a sacrilege," said M. Joly; "my conscience would trouble me more after entering than before."

Sighing, Pichon shut the door.

M. Joly still held in his hand the pistol.

"Do you mind showing me where you found this, Pichon?"

"Not in the least," said Pichon, leading the way to Gervais's room. "He was asleep

there on the bed when I found it. It was in this drawer" — and he related the conversation had with Gervais. "Certainly at that time he lied to me, from fear, perhaps. But at last he admitted that after the delivery of the bank-notes, while Monsieur Janvier was out, he and Potin were in the library. He says that he went there with the glass of hot water, and that Potin came to tell him he had left the pistol in the pantry. Not to see what was in the drawer when setting down the glass was impossible. What do you think?"

In this indictment of Gervais, Pichon was forgetting his previous argument.

"I think," said M. Joly, looking over Pichon's shoulder into Gervais's drawer, "that this butler is a thrifty fellow. Here is a passbook of the Communal Savings Bank."

"Perhaps you will find there a deposit of thirty thousand francs," said Pichon sarcastically.

"I will have a look at it," smiled M. Joly, putting it into his pocket. "An ac-

count in a savings bank is a certificate of good character. At what hour does Monsieur Sartain resume his enquiry?"

"At two."

"Then I have an hour. I will follow his example and get a bite in the café opposite. If you were not on duty, Pichon, I would ask you — but that will be for another day. By the way, would it be possible to have a word with Potin?"

"Be easy. I will have him here."

On his way to the café M. Joly went into Potin's lodge. More successful in his quest than Pichon had been, he emerged a little later with a small bottle which he found behind the clock.

The good example of M. Sartain seemed to have slipped his mind, for, passing the café, he entered the upholsterer's shop next door.

"Have you a feather?" he asked.

"Feathers?"

"Well, if you prefer the plural, feathers," said M. Joly placidly.

"There are samples here in this case,"

replied the clerk. "For what purpose do you require them? There are different qualities, — for pillows? A pillow, for example, requires one and a half kilos."

"I only require one."

"As you please, but one kilo —"

"No, one feather," said M. Joly, bending over the case and selecting one suitable for his purpose. "I regret greatly disturbing you for such a trifle. If there is anything to pay —"

"For one feather!" exclaimed the clerk, smiling at his singular customer; "do not mention it."

"Thank you. Is there a chemist in the neighborhood?"

"Two streets down, on the corner, at your service."

After procuring at the chemist's a small vial, M. Joly retraced his steps to the café, and selecting a table in a secluded corner, ordered a *sirop*.

"We are having some excitement in the quarter," said the waiter serving him; "there has been a murder opposite."

"Really!"

"An old gentleman named Janvier. You will find an account of it in the *Petit Journal*. Shall I bring it to you? They have just arrested the concierge, Potin."

"What a singular name!" observed M. Joly.

"Within twenty-four hours! Quick work, is it not? They are so clever, the police."

"There is another explanation, my friend. Perhaps this Potin is *not* clever."

"The most harmless fellow in the world! One would never suspect him capable of such a thing."

"Then why do you do so?"

"Dame! Since they arrest him it must be so. Do you wish writing-paper?"

M. Joly had taken a pencil from his pocket and was opening his knife.

"No, thank you."

While sipping his *sirop* he applied himself to the mastery of Gervais's accounts. From the copious notes and computations required, it might be inferred that Gervais's system of bookkeeping was a complicated

one. After finishing his calculations, he made a small slit with his penknife in the end of his pencil, into which he inserted the stem of his feather. Using this as a swab, he collected the drops of oil with which Gervais in his haste had so plentifully besmeared the barrel of the revolver, touched the tip of the feather to his tongue, then imprisoned the feather safely in the vial.





XIII

MONSIEUR SARTAIN was unable to dismiss altogether the cares of office while eating his breakfast. The attack upon Achille had broken down. He was convinced the boy had told the truth, a conviction strengthened by information received both from the Prefecture and the Crédit Lyonnais as to Achille's character and good

habits, and the confidence of his employers. All thought of any understanding between him and the members of M. Janvier's household must be dismissed. In that quarter nothing more was to be learned. Achille was a discarded tool of no further consequence.

Nor was he satisfied with the result of Potin's examination. Potin was evidently an addle-pated fellow who, if sufficiently terrified, would swear to anything. Doubtless he had borrowed Gervais's revolver. But between shooting sparrows and murder there was no real connection. One does not need to practise on sparrows to shoot an inoffensive old gentleman sitting in a chair. That he had really thrown the bullet into the sewer was probable, and its recovery was doubtful. Where had Potin found it? In the court, as he pretended? Then it must have been thrown there from one of the service windows, for those of the library looked on the street. There was also some force in Pichon's argument that an assassin from without had thrown it there when

making his escape. In his anxiety to be rid of it, he might have done so, but it was more probable that he would have selected a spot more remote. Criminals were more or less insane. It was impossible to reason upon what they would or would not do in the stress of fear as if they were sane. Possibly Potin knew more than he had admitted, and such a simple fellow might easily be made use of by others. That he was guilty, he did not believe. But until the enquiry was over, it was just as well to let fear work upon him. In confinement he might be more communicative.

Achille and Potin disposed of, M. Sartain's thoughts turned to Gervais. The rag burned in the kitchen had been identified as part of a new napkin, one of a dozen recently purchased. Why was a new napkin burned? Gervais had admitted to Pichon that he was in the library before breakfast. At that time the bank-notes were in the drawer. Did he see them? It was certainly possible, for the drawer was open when Doctor Marbœuf came. Inasmuch as the only

finger-prints found upon it were those of M. Janvier, the latter must have carelessly left it open on going out. Either before breakfast when taking in the glass of water, or afterwards when the crime was committed, Gervais could have taken them. But what had he done with them? Pichon was confident they were not in the apartment.

Between the stopping of the clock and the arrival of Doctor Marbœuf was an interval of nearly half an hour. What was Gervais doing in that interval while Corinne and Jocaste were out? In half an hour might not a pistol have been cleaned a second time, with a napkin subsequently burned? If the bank-notes had been passed to a confederate, it must have been in that interval before Doctor Marbœuf came, for afterwards no one had been permitted to leave. Gervais would have to account for that half-hour! He had already lied to Pichon. As for that matter Jocaste also had been willing to lie. For what reason? Whom was she shielding? And why had she gone out with Corinne on the pretence of getting

flowers precisely when the murderer was at his work? Was she acting in accordance with a plan arranged beforehand in thus absenting herself with mademoiselle? He would have an understanding with Jocaste before examining Gervais.

Besides all this were certain facts whose connection with the tragedy was a mystery. What had this necklace of which no one knew anything, this loge at the Folies Dramatiques, this clipping from the *Figaro* in praise of Mademoiselle Fleurette, to do with a savant well known for his probity and modesty, whose chief aim in life was to codify the social laws of the cicada?

In his perplexity M. Sartain did not resent the advent of M. Joly. He had had experience with him and knew his worth. M. Joly, moreover, was on intimate terms with M. Janvier. Something certainly might be gained from his intelligence and practical experience.

M. Joly was sitting beside him when Jocaste entered the library.

Many, living so long in intimacy with one

chosen for a consort, would either have broken the contract or, yielding to proximity and importunity, have consented to its consummation. Jocaste did neither. Prudence, which she rated among the cardinal virtues, Gervais considered her besetting sin.

Those crabbed philosophers who, while comporting themselves like other people, rail at the illusions which attend the Will to Live, and preach at a ripe old age race suicide as the ideal of humanity, would be forced to see in Jocaste the exception on which rules rely. For though marriage was her firm resolve, she had invested Gervais with none of those qualities which Corinne had attributed to Achille. Yet Jocaste was a woman, as tenacious and jealous of her man as any pasha of his hundred wives.

Perhaps, having entered M. Janvier's service when Corinne was first adopted, certain latent instincts in her nature had been partially gratified by the exclusive care of this orphan waif. M. Janvier himself was a child, giving ample scope for Jocaste's maternal proclivities.

Among those instincts of hers was that of caste. It had never entered her head to climb out of the station in which she was born. To the ambitious product of modern democracy M. Janvier might have appealed as legitimate prey. Jocaste fell into no such vulgar error. She regarded a husband with the eye of suitability, as one of those indispensable articles to be selected with the same care and regard for wearing qualities that she exercised in the choice of a dress material. Some of her friends in choosing their partners had rushed to disaster. Jocaste had resolved that haste should not be her undoing. She was not avaricious, but she had the thrift of her race, and was not inclined to embark on the ocean of matrimony, of whose certainties as well as uncertainties she was well aware, like the wise men who put to sea in an empty bowl.

And yet — and yet — Jocaste was a woman, forgiving, with those possibilities of tenderness and pity which only disaster fully discloses. In spite of his recent brutality and the haunting fear of his guilt, rather

because of them, she rallied to Gervais's side as to a maimed child on whom a mother lavishes what the world withholds. One thing only could poison the spring of her loyalty at its source — treachery. In her honest soul this possibility found no lodgment.

The ordeal through which she had passed had shaken her, but when summoned to the library, face to face with her own crisis, her back to the wall with no possible retreat, her stubborn native courage rose. She had made up her mind not to believe herself, to fight against herself as well as against others. The resolute spirit of Corinne shamed her. And she detested Pichon! The mere sight of him inspired her with the courage of hate. When he ushered her into M. Sartain's presence she flashed upon him a look which penetrated even his stolid impassiveness like a fiery dart, facing her judges erect and defiant.

M. Sartain observed that the woman before him was not the one he had seen wavering between two answers.

"Jocaste, it seems your master was fond of the theatre." Jocaste could not believe her ears. "Sit down, my girl, you are trembling. Servants do not always know the habits and tastes of those they serve."

"I am not trembling, and they know them better than any one."

"You would be surprised, then, to learn that Monsieur Janvier recently engaged a loge at the Folies Dramatiques."

"I would laugh," said Jocaste.

"Since you know your master so well, would you laugh to know that he purchases pearls costing thirty thousand francs?"

"No, they were for Corinne."

"But mademoiselle denies all knowledge of them."

"It was her birthday," said Jocaste.

During this colloquy she had been studying the face of M. Joly. She had seen him frequently when accompanying Corinne to Monrepos, for Corinne and Dorante had become devoted to each other. On those occasions M. Joly always had a pleasant word for her. It worried her that now he

should not even look at her. For why was he here if not in answer to Corinne's appeal, as protector and friend? Jocaste had yet to learn that friends sometimes offer a bitter medicine in the name of friendship.

M. Joly had raised the cover of the jewel-case, and was showing a card to the magistrate. M. Sartain smiled at first, then, annoyed, frowned and changed the subject.

"You have lost a kind master, Jocaste."

"I do not need to be told the master was kind."

"A master whose kindness outlasts life, since he provides for you in his will. It appears you wish to purchase the little shop of Rodin."

Jocaste's eyes were slowly widening. How did they know that?

"We have been speaking of that for the last year," she retorted.

"Five thousand francs, to establish you in trade — did you know that?"

M. Janvier had never mentioned any specific sum. Jocaste could not refrain from

making a rapid calculation of her assets before replying.

"What passed between us is our affair," she said.

"Does nothing in your conscience revolt at accepting —"

Jocaste's eyes began to blaze. The implication that she was in any way concerned in M. Janvier's death did not dawn upon her. She was thinking solely of her twelve years of drudgery and patience.

"My conscience is also my affair, and it does not trouble me."

Pichon was wondering how long this reign of leniency would last.

"This bequest, then, coming at this time when Rodin has advertised his business for sale, is an opportune one."

"Alas, yes."

"How many years have you been in M. Janvier's service?"

"Twelve."

"You were in the habit of making purchases for the household?"

"Yes."

"Then it was you who bought recently a dozen new napkins of fine linen."

"Yes," replied Jocaste unhesitatingly.

"Quite recently. Do you know one of these napkins is missing?"

"No," she said firmly.

"Here is one of them, of fine quality. Pass this to Jocaste," he said to the stenographer. "You recognize it?"

"Yes."

"You would not by any chance call it a dishrag, would you?"

Jocaste was thinking hard.

"When by any chance," she said, dwelling on the repeated words, "a fine napkin is ruined, it becomes a dishrag — that goes without saying."

"Do you burn dishrags in this house, Jocaste?"

"No; we keep such things for the ragman."

"But you know one of these napkins was burned?"

"How could I know that if I did not know it was missing?"

His hands folded over his waistcoat, M. Joly nearly smiled.

"What happened to this napkin to cause it to be burned?"

"How should I know what happened to it! Did I burn it? We do not make a fuss in this house over such a trifle."

"But trifles interest you, Jocaste. No, you did not burn it. It was Gervais who did so. Why were you so anxious to see if it was consumed?"

Rage against Pichon was boiling in Jocaste's valiant soul. Her eyes closed and opened superciliously.

"What nonsense are you saying?" she muttered.

"You deny? Be careful! Did you not hear Rosalie say that Gervais burned the napkin in the kitchen?"

"Rosalie said it was a rag. I know nothing about a napkin."

"Well, we will admit that what was once a napkin becomes a rag. Do you deny that you wished to see whether the rag mentioned by Rosalie was consumed?"

"Yes, I deny it."

"This morning, Jocaste, you denied what afterward you admitted."

"To save that innocent boy I would lie willingly," she broke in hotly.

"Yes, Jocaste, I know it. But lies are of no avail. Would you also lie to shield the guilty?"

"How can I, since I do not know who is guilty?"

"But you have suspicions."

"No more than you," she said truthfully.

All this time she saw Gervais's revolver lying on the table and was making up her mind what she would say.

"This pistol, this revolver," asked M. Sartain, still conciliatory, — "to whom does it belong?"

"Let me see it."

It was handed to her.

"It is Gervais's. I know it by a dent in the handle."

M. Sartain's voice hardened. Where he expected denials, evasions, he met candor.

"Yesterday after breakfast you took

mademoiselle to the flower market. Morning is the hour for the flower market. In the afternoon the finest blooms are gone and the dealers are preparing to return to the country. Did you think it advisable that at that hour, when a robbery was about to be consummated, you and Mademoiselle Corinne should be absent?"

Jocaste perceived at once that this was not a question. She was accused of being privy to a crime before it was committed. Concerned with shielding another, she had not thought of herself. For a moment her wits deserted her. True to the instinct of her sex, she cast about desperately for anything to confuse the issue. Tears were appropriate, but unavailing. Suddenly she began to laugh hysterically, her face lighting with the joy of a happy inspiration.

"For what night did Monsieur Janvier engage a loge at the theatre? Was it not for yesterday, the birthday of Corinne?"

"You are evading my question, Jocaste."

"What question?" she asked innocently.

"Why you absented yourself with Made-moiselle Cor—"

"For *flowers!*" she cried; "it was her birthday! Flowers for the dinner table — ask Gervais — he heard Monsieur Janvier at breakfast tell us to go for them."

While listening to Jocaste, M. Joly had jotted down a number of observations in his mental notebook. Unconsciously she was painting her own portrait, and M. Joly maintained that no matter how poor a portrait one paints of another, the portrait one paints of one's self is always trustworthy. Jocaste had sketched the outlines with a bold hand when she entered, and every answer to M. Sartain's questions was another stroke of the brush. At the present moment the portrait was complete, and M. Joly was saying to himself: "An intelligent girl, also an honest one, economical, especially of truth. In whose interest?"

Leaning over to M. Sartain, he whispered a word in his ear.

M. Sartain nodded.

"Jocaste," said M. Joly, "you talked

with Monsieur Janvier about this shop of Rodin's. He had agreed to assist you in acquiring it, and by the terms of his will you will receive for that purpose five thousand francs. Is that sufficient?"

"No," said Jocaste, knitting her brows. What was he aiming at?

"Then what will you do?"

"I have also twelve years of economies."

"I congratulate you. I do not ask what they amount to, but only whether they will enable you to satisfy the demands of Rodin."

Jocaste was endeavoring to see the end of the road along which this man, who was so solicitous for her success, was leading her — a road which interested her immensely. For twelve years to embark in business had been her ambition. She had weighed the relative advantages and risks of various trades, and had come to the conclusion, when Rodin announced his intention to retire, that it was the profit on his wares which enabled him to do so. She had al-

ready added mentally her own savings to M. Janvier's legacy with the result that the discrepancy between their sum and Rodin's terms convinced her that Rodin was a brigand bent upon extorting from her the last penny.

"Rodin is a robber," she said contemptuously.

"Then what will you do? Have you other resources?"

Completely diverted from the subject she feared to the one which absorbed her, — "There are also the economies of Gervais," she declared; "we are to be partners."

"Ah, well, if that is the case you need have no anxiety," smiled M. Joly, quite satisfied; "Gervais is a famous economist."

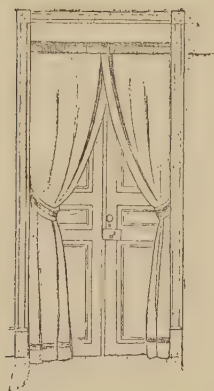
Jocaste gazed at him in deep perplexity. Every month she had exacted from Gervais a fixed proportion of his wages. Just what the total of this tax amounted to she knew as well as she knew the number of fingers on her two hands, and still Rodin's figures had not been reached.

"You appear to doubt what I say," said

M. Joly. "Reassure yourself. Gervais himself will convince you."

There was another brief consultation, after which M. Sartain said: —

"Pichon, call Gervais."



XIV

THE first person Gervais saw on entering the library was Jocaste. It might almost be said she was the only one he saw, and he experienced that *malaise*, that sinking of the heart, which accompanies the necessity of lying in the presence of one whose opinion is precious. For the opinion of Jocaste was of more value to him than his own. In the partnership she had mentioned to M. Joly, she was the senior member. To be dissected, laid bare, exposed, while struggling for his life, under her gaze, was a humiliation he had not expected, and to lie, if necessary at her expense, was unavoidable. At that moment he hated her for her rugged honesty.

It was Satan who said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Mistaken in regard to Job, he counted with certainty upon Gervais.

Not once did Gervais look again at Jocaste. His whole attention was riveted upon this man sitting beside M. Sartain who held in his hand a yellow-covered notebook.

"I see from this book," began M. Joly, "that Monsieur Janvier was in the habit of settling the household expenses weekly. Who rendered these accounts to Monsieur Janvier?"

There was no escape from this question.

"I did."

"They are in your handwriting?"

"Yes."

"This book begins with Saturday, December 10th. Have you the accounts of earlier date?"

"No; I destroyed them."

"In the account of December 10th, there is a small error of four francs ten centimes."

"It is possible."

"In that of December 17th, there is an error of eleven francs, and in that of December 24th, one of fifteen francs. These errors are all in excess, so that after paying the

purveyors the amounts due them, you had left on your hands the sums I have mentioned. Did you return them to Monsieur Janvier?"

"I think so."

"But for a fact, to which I will call your attention later, that would seem to be a reasonable inference, for these errors are not carried forward from week to week. Coming down to the present I observe only one week in which there is no error. For that week the handwriting is that of another person. Is it perchance yours?" he asked, showing the page to Jocaste.

Jocaste could not speak.

"That is of no importance," continued M. Joly. "The total of these errors since December 10th is two hundred and seventy-nine francs, eighty-five centimes, all of which you say was returned to Monsieur Janvier."

"I did not say that. Every week Monsieur Janvier gave me an amount sufficient for the expenses of that week. After paying the tradesmen, I returned the difference, whatever it was."

"What difference? The difference between what he gave you and the footings of these columns? In that case you made a profit of two hundred and seventy-nine francs, eighty-five centimes."

"You are mistaken," said Gervais desperately. "There were no such sums left in my hands. Ask Jocaste — she knows that every month I gave her the half of my wages."

"I am not asking you about what Jocaste knows, but of what she does not know. Does she know, for example, that on December 18th, the day after Monsieur Janvier overpaid you eleven francs, you deposited exactly eleven francs in the savings bank? — that with but one exception the deposits in this passbook agree with the errors in your accounts? It is an excellent system — to confide to the State what Monsieur Janvier confided to you is what the mathematicians call the compensation of errors."

Gervais saw that he was trapped.

"Jocaste was forever tormenting me

about this Rodin," he said stolidly. "I did it for her sake."

For her sake! And the savings bank! A sound which was both a groan and a menace escaped from Jocaste. Her heart had begun to sink with M. Joly's first question. With each fresh disclosure she experienced a new sensation. Gervais was robbing the master! Her honest soul revolted. What had he done with all this money? With the production of the passbook she passed from shame and reproach to hot indignation. What! For twelve years she had slaved and denied herself while he had been secretly feathering his own nest like a dog that buries a bone! That M. Janvier, poor gentleman! should be such a simpleton — but that she, Jocaste! And he had the effrontery to say that she tormented him — that it was for her sake!

"What has all this to do with it?" cried Gervais, shrugging his shoulders insolently.

During Potin's examination he had carefully studied his situation. No one had seen him. There was no witness. What, then,



No. 13, RUE DU BON DIABLE

had he to fear? The bank-notes, about which they were making all this fuss, were destroyed. The bullet was in the sewer. He had only to be careful not to contradict himself, to stick to his story, and nothing could be proved against him. On one point only was he troubled. Had Potin seen the bank-notes in his hand when he came to the library? He had intended to get this out of Potin when Dupin interrupted their conversation. Disconcerted and humiliated by the presence of Jocaste, he was now quivering with fury at this man who exposed him as a common thief, a petty pilferer.

"True," smiled M. Joly, glancing at M. Sartain; "I efface myself."

"Gervais," said M. Sartain, "yesterday morning Monsieur Janvier received a visitor. Tell us what you know about it."

"I was laying the table when I heard the bell in the anteroom. The messenger enquired for Monsieur Janvier. I asked what his errand was. He said he wished to see Monsieur Janvier personally, so I showed him into the library. Afterwards, when I

took in the glass of hot water, no one was there. That did not surprise me —”

“Confine yourself to the facts. When I am curious to know your opinions I will ask for them.”

“I meant that because frequently Monsieur Janvier went to consult books in the shop opposite, I supposed they had gone out together. I was busy, and the door of the dining-room was shut.”

“You placed the glass of water on the table?”

“Yes; then Potin called me to say he had left the revolver on the shelf in the pantry. When I went back I found it there as he said.”

“Wait a moment. We are going too fast. The messenger remitted to Monsieur Janvier a sum of money in bank-notes which Monsieur Janvier put into the drawer on the right of the table. This drawer was open. Did you see them?”

For the space of a second Gervais hesitated. What had Potin seen while standing in the doorway? What had he testified?

"No; when Potin came I went out directly to finish laying the table. Then Monsieur Janvier returned and breakfast was served."

"You heard him tell mademoiselle to go to the flower market?"

"Oh, yes. It was her birthday. After breakfast she went out with Jocaste and Monsieur Janvier returned to the library. I unlatched the door that they might come in without troubling me."

"But you were there, in the pantry."

"No; I went to my room."

"For what purpose?"

"To wait for Jocaste who always assisted me in clearing the table."

"Why did you not wait in the pantry?" Gervais had anticipated this question. It was clear that if he replaced the revolver at once, the murder must have been committed with some other weapon. It was not his business to supply it.

"Because I wished to put back the revolver in my drawer where it belonged."

"Was it before or after going to your room that you burned the napkin?"

So they knew that, did they! He had not foreseen this question, but his mind, alert, began instantly to reason. If Rosalie in the kitchen had heard nothing, neither could he.

"Afterwards. In my room I remembered that when lighting the gas jet in the pantry I had dropped the match on a napkin, and I wished to prevent Jocaste from seeing it."

"Why should you wish to prevent Jocaste from seeing it?"

"It was a new one. She would be angry."

Jocaste smiled grimly.

"So you destroyed it. But Jocaste was housekeeper. She would discover later that it was missing."

"I put off the evil day," said Gervais uneasily.

"Are you in such a terror of Jocaste?"

As regards Jocaste his bridges were already burned.

"She has a bad temper," he said in desperation.

Jocaste's heart gave a leap which sent the blood to her face. For a moment she had

almost believed in the reason for burning the napkin. She knew now he was lying, and the knife that was turning in his heart was also turning in hers. Wretch that he was, he was suffering, and she suffered with him. At the same time the desire to see, to know, which draws the bystander from the outskirts of the crowd to the victim of an accident in its centre, fascinated her. She cast an appealing look at M. Joly.

“Marie,” he said that evening to his wife, “how profound is the difference between the sexes! You are ruled by your interest in the individual, whereas I am governed by the interests of society. You draw the knife from the wound in the name of mercy, and I in the name of justice give it another twist. Let us not judge too severely that Roman procurator who asked in his perplexity, ‘What is Truth?’ — since we have not yet succeeded in persuading the lamb of mercy to lie down with the lion of justice.”

From Jocaste’s face, distorted by a poignant agony, M. Joly turned to M. Sartain.

“I would like to ask Potin a question.”

"Let him come in," replied the magistrate.

Pale, his eyes blinking, Potin appeared. He resembled an owl brought from darkness into a lighted room. During his confinement he had accumulated a number of ideas and he was now bursting with impatience to unbosom himself. Gervais was right. He was "in a fix." He would tell all he knew, which was nothing; and because he knew nothing it was better to say so. Before being addressed, he began to pour out his grievances.

"**Monsieur le Magistrat —**"

"Wait a little, Potin," said M. Joly, raising his hand. "It is very difficult to identify an oil with certainty." Potin cocked up his ears like a dog hearing a strange sound. What had oil to do with his misery! "The chemist tells me that the various tests employed for this purpose, dependent upon the saponification and iodine values, require a quantity which we have not at our disposal." His mouth open, Potin heard these formidable words with an

awe which imposed silence. "But that is immaterial. It is quite enough to observe that the oil in this bottle which you keep on your mantel —"

"Behind the clock," put in Potin, recognizing his bottle.

"—is one of those fluid oils of a pale straw color, probably derived from the jaw of the porpoise or dolphin, and admirably adapted for the lubrication of delicate machinery. Whereas the oil collected on this feather is more viscous, resembling in its deeper yellow color and taste the olive oil used in preparing salads. We are not obliged to satisfy the chemist as to the actual constitution of these oils. It is enough to show that they are not the same. Now, you, Potin, when you cleaned this revolver, used the clock oil from this bottle —"

"Surely," chimed in Potin, for the first time understanding what was said.

"—and you did well, using it sparingly —"

"A drop is enough," approved the irrepressible Potin, now deeply interested; "if

one uses too much, as some foolish persons do, it attracts the dust as sugar attracts flies, and gums. As my aunt said to me many times when eating the soup, 'Enough is enough.'"

"Yes, Potin, and with the same admirable care, you wiped the surface dry —"

"Without doubt. For that purpose I used a round lamp-wick, a new one, my handkerchief being too large," — in proof of which assertion Potin drew forth a voluminous one.

"Whereas," continued M. Joly, "the person who cleaned the barrel of this revolver the second time, the barrel from which the oil on this feather was taken, being in the pantry, employed naturally what was at hand, namely, the olive oil in the cruet, and being in haste used it liberally and omitted to wipe the barrel as you did."

"He did wrong," said Potin, not yet grasping the implication contained in this statement, and concerned that his handiwork should have been so tampered with.

"Yes, but after leaving the revolver in

the pantry, when you went into the library —”

“No, no,” cried Potin, becoming excited, “I stood at the door!”

“You saw Gervais with the glass of hot water —”

“Not at all!” shouted Potin, intent upon adhering to the truth in its minutest detail; “he was arranging the papers in the patron’s drawer.”

“He lies!” cried Gervais.

“Oh!” gasped Potin, choking with rage; “what is a man to do if he does not tell the truth? But it appears it makes no difference. My aunt used to say to me: ‘Potin, tell the truth, unless you are at fault — in that case say nothing.’ But I perceive it makes no difference!”

“Calm yourself, Potin,” said M. Joly; “your aunt gave you excellent advice, and since you are far from silent it is evident you are not at fault. Now, listen: in your testimony this morning you said you found the bullet in the court, and that you supposed the assassin, seeing it on Monsieur

Janvier's table, carried it off with him, throwing it into the court as he passed out. But in making this statement you said you took no credit for it. To whom do you give the credit for this hypothesis?"

"Hypothesis," said Potin warily; "what is that?"

"Did you know the clock on Monsieur Janvier's table was struck by the bullet?"

Potin shook his head vigorously.

"Well, then, unless you went back a second time into the library, how did you know the bullet was on the table?"

At last Potin saw his opportunity and grasped it firmly.

"Gervais said it must be so. He saw me pick it up in the court. He was at his window. He asked me this morning what I did with it. He abused me. He said I would say he threw it there. Why should I invent such a thing? I was sweeping. It rolled under my broom. Then he explained clearly how it happened."

"He lies!"

The voice died in a hoarse whisper.

Pichon sprang to his feet. He was too late. Gervais, his face a chalky white, had pitched forward on the floor.

Confusion reigned. Every one, the stenographer, Meneval, Dupin, ran to his side.

M. Joly went over to Jocaste.

"Come, my child," he said, taking her by the arm, "the play is over. Corinne has need of you."



XV

COMING out in the early morning on the broad steps which led from the front door to the garden, M. Joly walked down to the arbor where Mme. Joly was embroidering, filled with that joy of living to which she was so generous a contributor.

He had entered into no detailed explanations. Mme. Joly's aversion to any knowledge of his "affairs" was well known to him. That details of crime should be repugnant to her was to be expected. Curiosity in such matters would have revolted him. Yet how often he had experienced the desire to consult an intelligence so discerning! But it always ended by his saying to himself: "If it were otherwise she would not be Marie; it is better to let well enough alone."

"Marie," he said, "how many years is it since I first saw you sitting by that Medici fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens?



MADAME JOLY WAS EMBROIDERING

Positively, from your appearance I could swear it was only yesterday."

Mme. Joly's eyes rose from her work and fell again. A woman's silences are adorable.

"In those days I considered you a saint escaped from Paradise."

Mme. Joly smiled.

"I was a very ignorant one," she said, bending over her needle.

"Yes, we have both changed, and to my present mind a wise woman on earth is preferable to an ignorant saint in Paradise."

Mme. Joly looked up quickly.

"What have you to say to me?" she asked with that confident anticipation which always surprised him.

"What have I to say to you? — that I am inviting two guests to dinner."

"Ah!" said Mme. Joly quietly.

His hands crossed over his waistcoat, M. Joly watched the oval face in silent admiration.

"It is astonishing — " he said at length, and stopped.

"What is astonishing?"

"You remember Pichon, Marie."

"Very well."

"You know now he is full inspector?"

"I see nothing astonishing in that."

"No, it is the law of seniority. Unfortunately nothing better has been invented. Number one disappears and number two steps into his place. I say 'unfortunately' because all that rises to the top is not cream."

"You used to think a great deal of Pichon," observed Mme. Joly.

"Pichon is not a fool, but he amuses me. He resembles a faithful dog without a nose. A dog without a nose is like a man without an imagination."

"I understand. I understand also that to retire from active service is more difficult than even a man with an imagination anticipated."

"Come, come, Marie, in a case like this, where friendship was involved, would you have me derelict to duty?"

"I was not thinking of your duty, but of the pleasure it afforded you."

"Well, yes, I confess it. The pleasure, however, would be greater if the criminal were less stupid. He is so clumsy that with a little common sense —" He paused again. A faint smile was hovering between eyes and mouth.

"I thought you said Pichon lacked imagination."

"Perhaps he has too much," sighed M. Joly. "He reminds me of one of those ants that bustle about so aimlessly."

"What are you going to do with Jocaste?" asked Mme. Joly after a silence.

"Does she inconvenience you, Marie?"

"Not at all."

"We shall be obliged to bring that brigand Rodin to terms."

"How like you! A heart is not healed so easily."

"If Jocaste were mad, like Corinne," said M. Joly musingly, — "for you know a great poet has said love is a madness — but I think Jocaste is a head rather than a heart."

"She is a woman," declared Mme. Joly.

Disconcerted, M. Joly found no answer. Mme. Joly was gathering up her work.

"I am going to tell Corinne we have guests for dinner."

"You know who they are!"

"Certainly. Mme. Moran and Achille."

M. Joly watched her retreating form. "She could not wait," he said to himself; "and they say woman excels in patience!"

He took up the book lying on the table, but reading was impossible.

"In some respects," he said, "the world is well managed. As regards the weather there is room for improvement; and were I the father of innumerable children, I would not have withheld so long certain discoveries which would have spared them much discomfort and misery. But I should never have thought of planting the seeds of new happiness in the decay of the old. That indeed was a sly trick."

THE END



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